

# **Horizon**

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND ART

---

**THE CHURCH AND RECONSTRUCTION**

*by* MERVYN STOCKWOOD

**IN THE PENAL COLONY**

*by* FRANZ KAFKA

**NOTES ON WAR GUILT**

*by* 'NEURO'

**NOTES ON FEDERICO GARCIA LORCA**

*by* ARTURO BAREA

REVIEWS *by* F. BORKENAU

PRODUCTIONS OF DRAWINGS *by* JOHN CRAXTON

---

MONTHLY: ONE SHILLING AND SIXPENCE NET

MARCH VOL. V, No. 27 1942

***Edited by Cyril Connolly***

## Above All Liberties

by ALEC CRAIG

The author of *The Banned Books of England* deals here with the evils that have resulted to literature, art, science and society from the operation of the laws directed against literary obscenity. 'Mr. Craig is doing sterling work for the genuine artist and against the smug hypocrisy which still holds courageous literature in thrall.'

—*Sunday Mercury* 7s. 6d. net

ALLEN & UNWIN  
40, Museum Street, W.C. 1

## BURGESS HILL SCHOOL

Redhurst, Cranleigh,  
Surrey

A modern day and boarding  
school for boys and girls  
from 5 to 14

High standard in academic  
subjects, arts and music

*Eggs, honey, fruit  
vegetables*

Moderate fees

Anthony Weaver, B.A.  
Kenneth Allott, B.A., B.Litt.,  
D.Th.P.T.

## Ruins & Visions

by

STEPHEN SPENDER

His first volume of poems  
since the war. 6/-

## Primitive Scenes and Festivals

SACHEVERELL  
SITWELL

A new major work. Illus-  
trations in collotype. 21/-

FABER & FABER

## The Discipline of Peace

K. E. BARLOW

Concerned with the permanent  
conditions of politics—the laws of  
the relation of man to environment  
in nature, which political philo-  
sophy and social planning tend  
to ignore. 8/6

FABER  
&  
FABER

## THE FABER BOOK OF COMIC VERSE

edited by

*Michael Roberts*

From the 16th Century  
to parodies of Yeats and  
Eliot. 8/6



# HORIZON

EDITED BY CYRIL CONNOLLY

Vol. V No. 27 March 1942

## CONTENTS

PAGE

THE CHURCH AND RECONSTRUCTION	Mervyn Stockwood	149
IN THE PENAL COLONY	Franz Kafka	158
NOTES ON WAR GUILT	'Neuro'	184
NOTES ON FEDERICO GARCIA LORCA	Arturo Barea	189
SELECTED NOTICES:		
BLACK RECORD, GERMANS PAST AND PRESENT		
THE ROOTS OF NATIONAL SOCIALISM, 1783-1933	F. Borkenau	210

REPRODUCTIONS: Drawings by John Craxton  
between pages 188 and 189

The editorial and publishing offices of HORIZON are at 6 Selwyn House, Lansdowne Terrace, W.C.1.—Six months' subscription, 10/- net, including postage, U.S.A.—75. Agents in U.S.A. & Canada: Gotham Book Mart, 51 West 47th Street, Universal Distributors, 38 Union Square, New York City, U.S.A. For advertising terms please write to The Business Manager. Terminus 4898

MSS. submitted should be accompanied by a stamped, addressed envelope, and will not be returned if this is not enclosed

## A STRICKEN FIELD

a novel by MARTHA GELLHORN

This is not a happy book. But it is almost a great one. It has power and sharp incisive writing. It is a story of horror, torture and death—and it is true. You will not enjoy reading it, but you will be moved and shaken by it.

[8s net]

## MORTAL STRIFE

JOHN COWPER POWYS

A definition of the attitude to the war of the ordinary Britisher. The author argues that we owe the strength of our resistance to our individual soul, from whence spring our humour, our eccentricity and obstinacy.

[10s 6d net]

## WALT WHITMAN

HUGH I'ANSON FAUSSET

'A long, admirable, learned, imaginative and intelligent study of Whitman, full of good judgments and interesting information. The author has a clear understanding of the period and of Whitman's character, and a sensitive appreciation of Whitman's writings.'

[12s 6d net]

## CATHERINE OF ARAGON

GARRETT MATTINGLY

One of those rare books, brilliant yet buttressed by scholarship and research, that make you see history through new eyes. Professor Neale says: 'Books at once so scholarly and so readable are extremely rare.' OVER 70,000 SOLD IN U.S.A.

March 13

[18s net]

JONATHAN CAPE



MERVYN STOCKWOOD

## THE CHURCH AND RECONSTRUCTION

IN a lecture which he recently delivered to the Fabian Society, Mr. Victor Gollancz made a reference to possible collaboration between Socialists and Christians which seems to me to be sufficiently important to be quoted in full, especially as it raises the very issues which this article sets out to discuss. 'It would be less than honest for me to pretend that, as I thought when I was younger and happier man, the establishment of international socialism will of itself produce the New Jerusalem. Whether we believe in original sin or whether we believe in Freud, we must face the fact that this urge for power, this call of self-interest, is an ancestral heritage from which only by a supreme effort can mankind escape. Expel it with a pitchfork and, unless we strive and struggle, it will always come running back. The supersession of capitalism by socialism is, negatively, the condition for our freedom from selfishness and egoism: for capitalism encourages greed, reinforces it, consecrates it, makes it the norm of human behaviour. And not only so: the practice of socialism will positively strengthen the other-regarding impulses of humanity, provided that within the larger structures there is the widest possible network of smaller bodies, in which the citizens democratically co-operate for specific ends. But over and above all this something more is required; if selfishness is to be controlled, men and women must be associated for another purpose—for the preservation and development of what, if you will permit the shorthand, may be called the Christian tradition. For my own part, and to the horror of many of my friends, I look forward to the linking up, for this end, of a Church no longer divorced from politics, with humanists or stoics who accept the Christian ethic but not the Christian dogma. What hinders such co-operation? The sanction for conduct is different: the conduct valued is the same. For the Christian, the sanction for right-doing is the existence and nature of God. For the modern stoic to do right

without hope of any reward, either now or in the hereafter: to do right, while even unable to give to 'right' itself, as religion and philosophy can, an absolute meaning: by and in that alone do we ourselves become absolute, and by and in it alone do we win a reward of which neither changing circumstance nor utter annihilation can ever rob us.'

As a priest who is also a convinced Socialist, I welcome this appeal for co-operation and I can assure Mr. Gollancz that there are many in the Church who are anxious to respond to his challenge and to make common cause in the interests of Reconstruction. In the past such joint action has been rendered difficult for two reasons: (a) Christians have found it almost impossible to discover a working basis when asked to associate with Left-wingers who have dismissed their insistence upon the necessity of an ethical basis as the product of bourgeois reaction; (b) Non-Christians have been sceptical of a Church which has appeared to be indifferent to the affairs of this world and which when it has stepped into the political arena has usually done so as the champion of the *status quo* or, worse still, of Fascism.

To deal with these in turn. Mr. Gollancz puts the dilemma quite simply in his opening sentence when he says: 'It would be less than honest for me to pretend that, as I thought when I was a younger and a happier man, the establishment of international socialism will of itself produce the New Jerusalem.' I am reminded of an enthusiastic young Communist who because he lived in my parish came to me to sign a paper. 'I don't know you', he said, 'but I expect you are like every other parson—a humbug'. 'You may not know me' I replied, 'but I happen to know all about you—I know, for instance, that you have such a foul temper and are so blatantly selfish that your family simply cannot put up with you and you are having to live in a room by yourself away from home'. A trivial incident but one that is important, because it illustrates the attitude of mind of a man who is enthusiastic about changing the economic order, even to the point of attacking those who do not see eye to eye with him, but is incapable of realising that ultimately happiness and successful living depend not merely upon this or that social system but upon the disposition and disciplined effort of the individual. It is, of course, true that economics condition a man's character, that it is difficult for a victim of the capitalist system



brought up in a poverty-stricken home, slung out on the unemployment heap and compelled to fritter away his existence in a state of enforced and embittered futility, to practise the qualities of unselfishness, patience, honesty and courtesy; but it has to be recognised that these qualities cannot be acquired through economics alone. My Communist acquaintance in Bristol was intolerable to those who had to live with him, but I doubt whether twenty years in Moscow under the Stalin regime would of itself sweeten his character! The reason why I stress this point is that a man's personal behaviour conditions his attitude towards his fellows and to the society in which he lives and therefore determines his credentials as a politician. Presumably no Socialist society is worthy of the name unless the individuals who compose it have learnt to reverence one another's personalities; we may pay lip service to Communism and be ready to take the necessary steps to bring such an economy into being, but Community only becomes possible when a man acquires the art of living his every minute not for himself but for the common good. When, for instance, a mother curses and bangs her child it means that she has not learnt that the child has a personality to be revered; this is equally true when a sergeant treats a recruit as though he were a mere automaton, or when a government official allows the letter of red-tape regulations to strangle the spirit which originally prompted the regulations.

Similarly in the realm of political action, the success or failure of a particular programme will depend upon the personal integrity of those who sponsor it and upon their ability to treat friend and foe alike as human beings to be revered. The Spanish episode may illustrate what I mean. Like every other socialist I was keenly anxious that the Republicans should win and I was bitterly disappointed when it became apparent that the Chamberlain-Halifax Government was determined to support the Fascist Franco and to overthrow democracy; but unlike some non-Christian Leftists I was not prepared to accept without criticism the 'Party line' of some sections, because I was convinced that a persistence in dishonest, if not inhuman, methods would condition adversely the ends likely to be attained. Hence I was a bit surprised when, once the Spanish war was over, several Communist friends of mine, including some who were members of the Communist Party, told me that they were ready to reconsider

their attitude to the whole question of ethics as they had realised that political action which substitutes 'tactics' and 'correct lines' for honesty and integrity is not likely to achieve a genuinely Socialist end. I do not know whether Mr. Gollancz would agree with me in this, but judging by his more recent writings the problem came home to him acutely in his dealings with the Communist Party after 3rd September 1939, when the adaptable King Street conjurer turned black into white and white into black in the interests of the 'correct line', until he decided to reverse the process in June 1941.

The practical outcome of what I have written is to be found in our propaganda for Social Reconstruction. While I realize that mere expressions of good will lead us nowhere—Capitalism thrives on it—yet an appeal issued by men with a lust for power and directed to the most selfish interests of a particular class may lead us to a destination which will be very different from the Utopia which some imagine, if for no other reason than that those who would respond to such propaganda would be the very people who because they have never learned to reverence human personality would be incapable of realizing the meaning of Community.

Instead there must be an appeal to the best in man which will set out to show that within the framework of a scientific socialism fullness of life becomes a possibility for all men; an appeal which will refrain from cheap electioneering promises which cannot possibly be redeemed and will be directed to the mind and not to the emotions, an appeal which will demand from those who hear it a consecration and a devotion for the arts of peace no less exacting than that which Mr. Churchill issued after Dunkirk for the arts of war.

From what I understand of the recent writings of Victor Gollancz, John Strachey and Stephen Spender, they are in general agreement with this contention which to us Christians is quite fundamental and about which we cannot possibly compromise—this then should be our starting point in our main work of co-operation.

The second point to be discussed is the scepticism with which the Church is regarded by many Leftists; to them it is impossible that an organization which seems to be the epitome of reaction, whose one object is to supply the religious sanction for the *status quo*, should be sincere in its professions about Reconstruction.



It is true that in many respects the Church has a black record. The Papacy's blessing on Mussolini's barbarian campaign in Abyssinia, its whole-hearted support of the fascist hordes in Spain, its anti-democratic intrigues in Austria, are among the most lamentable and immoral episodes in recent history. In our own country the Church has not sunk to such abysmal depths and its leaders have had a far more realistic understanding of the fascist menace than most of our politicians, but by its policy of silence and by its refusal to take sides in political disputes, it has negatively assisted the reactionary forces—about that there can be no question, and for that it passes under condemnation.

That, however, is not the whole truth, for in the Church in all parts of the world there has been a courageous minority which has fearlessly proclaimed that religious principles must be worked out in political practice. In October 1936, the Catholic President of the Basque Government said in the Cortes, 'I wish you to note that we are opposing Imperialism and Fascism in order to defend our Christian character. We are on your side, for apart from all our differences in ideals and principles, there is nothing in your proletarian movement or your social aspirations, so far as they are just and necessary, which makes us afraid. Until Fascism is defeated the Basque people will remain firmly at their post.'

In Britain, the Archbishop of York summoned a conference at Malvern in January 1941, when as Mr. Sidney Dark said, 'Dr. Temple nailed the Red Flag to the ecclesiastical mast', for the conference called for the abolition of the private ownership of land and the means of production. It condemned the spiritual degradation which results from the wage system and it asserted that the existing capitalist system is 'a predisposing cause of war'. Perhaps the most remarkable of all are those churchmen in Germany and in the occupied countries who, standing firm on the Christian Gospel at the cost of their lives, are urging men to join them in doing what little they can to withstand the wickedness of Nazism and to prepare for the Reconstruction of European society.

I mention these instances because it is only fair to remember that although Canterbury was ruled by a septuagenarian who was responsible for the official ecclesiastic procedure, Dr. Lang's successor, Dr. Temple of York, is one of the best men in the country, as fearless as he is progressive;

similarly, while the Bishop of Gloucester is not in sympathy with modern tendencies, and, judging by some of his recent utterances, has still a deal to learn about Christianity, the Bishop of Munster, the Cardinal Archbishop of Munich and the Primate of Yugo-Slavia shine forth as lights of hope in darkened Europe.

What is true of the leaders of the Church is true of the rank and file. While it would be inaccurate to describe the average congregation as the Tory party at prayer, yet it must be admitted there is a widespread indifference to social problems and a too easy acceptance of the *status quo*; but in this Church people are no worse than their fellow citizens, who seem quite ready for the country to be governed as it is so long as nothing interferes with their visits to the picture house and to the greyhound stadium. Moreover, the things which the non-politically minded Churchman learns are not useless, because he is at least encouraged to be unselfish in his personal life and to consider the needs of others—virtues which will be very necessary in a Socialist England and which I have often found sadly lacking in the purely secular organizations to which I have belonged, not least the Labour Party! The real hope, however, lies with the minority of keen politically-minded Christians who are to be found in most congregations who are consumed with a burning passion to make the world and their own country in particular what they believe God means them to be. These are the men whose spiritual ancestors led the Peasants' Revolt, who opposed the tyranny of the Papacy and the monarchy, who strove for the abolition of slavery and the exploitation of child labour, who gave enthusiastic support to the founders of the Labour movement, and who in more recent years played no small part in the pulling down of slum property and in the re-housing of the poor—men who because they have learned to reverence human personality were determined to give to their fellow citizens the opportunity to develop to a full life in mind and body and spirit, and so realize themselves as children of God. When Mr. Gollancz and those who think like him make contact with such men both sides will be immensely strengthened and their joint efforts should do much to inculcate an enthusiasm for social righteousness among those Churchmen who are apathetic and to remove the mistrust from the non-Christians who are sceptical.



The real difficulty which confronts us is the practical one of a programme. The leaders of the different Churches, Anglican, Roman Catholic and Nonconformist, have issued an authoritative document committing all the denominations in this country to certain guiding principles which must underlie all efforts of reconstruction. They are as follows:

1. Extreme inequality in wealth and possessions to be abolished.
2. Every child to have equal opportunities of education.
3. The family as a social unit to be safeguarded.
4. The sense of Divine vocation to be restored to man's daily work.
5. The resources of the earth to be used as God's gifts to the whole human race, for the needs of present and future generations.

Although Mr. Gollancz might use alternative phraseology in one or two places, I think he will find that these five principles, if correctly defined, form a satisfactory basis for a programme of Reconstruction, for they certainly include all the things which are most dear to the heart of a Socialist. The first and the fifth imply the abolition of the Capitalist System and the institution of a system which will enable all men to benefit from the common wealth; the second demands a complete overhaul of our educational facilities with the implication that opportunities are to depend upon the ability of the child and not upon the bank-balance of the parent; the third, if it is to be fulfilled requires a guaranteed security, while the fourth becomes a possibility only when wage-slavery has given place to a system which will enable every worker to contribute of his best to the common good, instead of to the employer or to the shareholder. So far, so good; but how are these principles to be put into practice? This is not a problem which confronts Churchmen alone; it is a problem which is as acute for Mr. Gollancz and his friends, and to which there is no easy solution. It would appear that Reconstruction is an impossibility so long as the present Government remains in power; for in spite of the brilliant leadership of Mr. Churchill, the plain fact is that the present Parliament is one which is intimately controlled by the purse strings of the very people who are most opposed to change, the property holders and financiers who form the backbone of the capitalist system and whose

opposition to Hitler is less than their opposition to a system which would strip them of their privileges. In peace conditions the obvious step would be to organize an opposition which would be capable of challenging the Government and taking over the reins of power; in present circumstances such a policy would obtain little support on the ground that Mr. Churchill's leadership is indispensable until the menace of Hitlerism has been removed and that the attempt would arouse domestic antagonisms which might endanger the nation's safety. The alternative suggestion that the Labour members of the Cabinet should press for a measure of Socialist reform is equally unsatisfactory. While the nationalisation of the railways and of the armament industries together with the raising of the school age would be steps in the right direction and thus prepare the way for Reconstruction, yet Mr. Attlee and his colleagues seem physically and morally incapable of taking the lead into their hands or of withstanding the strong forces which would oppose them.

In such a situation perhaps the only thing Socialists can do is to prepare the ground for future action so that when the day comes we shall be ready. This means grinding work and it involves our readiness to adopt a preparatory programme. To this end I would suggest the following :

(a) The need to make widely known the terms of a People's Charter. It might be wise to take over the five points put forward by the Church leaders which I have already quoted ; as, coming from such a source, it would enable our fellow citizens to realize that we are aiming at something greater than the making of political capital and it should provide us with allies in many quarters. This is not just a strategic expedient because it is a fact that many Leftists, Christian and non-Christian alike, would view such a Charter in the terms of a Crusade.

(b) The need to take an active part in local political and civic organizations. People are unlikely to listen to us when we speak to them about national problems unless they see us taking an active part in the solution of the problems which immediately concern them.

(c) The need to form groups or cells of persons who will endeavour to lead public opinion in the workshop, the ward or the borough; such cells should be on the broadest possible basis. In this the Church could play an important part.



(d) The need to organize large demonstrations and rallies throughout the country; we must look forward to the day when men of the calibre of the Archbishop of York and Sir Stafford Cripps will together present the People's Charter to such meetings.

The time is short and it is not too early to make a beginning, or it is conceivable that if the Russians succeed in fighting on German soil there will be some in this country who, fearing the spread of Socialism, will endeavour to make a peace with a German military-capitalist dictatorship, in which case Reconstruction will become as difficult in Britain as in Vichy France, and if it were to come at all it would probably be on the Communist model via a civil war.

This is something about which Christians cannot be indifferent. Week by week we meet together for a fellowship meal, then we pledge ourselves to our God, and in the inspiration which we receive from Him we return to the world with the determination to establish a Holy Community—a brotherhood in which all men will have the opportunity to live a full and useful life in accordance with the purposes of the Creator.

#### ABOUT THIS NUMBER

There is no room for 'Comment' or Poems in this number. The Rev. Mervyn Stockwood is Vicar of St. Matthew's, Bristol. 'In the Penal Colony' was written in 1918, translated in *Cahier du Sud*, and recently by Eugene Jolas for *Partisan Review*, whose permission it is reprinted for the first time in England. It must be one of Kafka's few works with a happy ending. Breca's last notes on Lorca 'and the intellectuals' will follow shortly. Franz Borkenau is the author of several anti-Nazi books, including *The New German Empire*, *Totalitarian Enemy*, and *Socialism: National or International?* The latter will appear 'The Labour Book Service'. John Craxton was born in 1922.

FRANZ KAFKA

## IN THE PENAL COLONY

It's a curious machine,' said the officer to the explorer, and despite the fact that he was well acquainted with the apparatus, he nevertheless looked at it with a certain admiration, as it were. It was apparently merely out of courtesy that the explorer had accepted the invitation of the commanding officer to attend the execution of a private soldier condemned for disobedience and insulting a superior officer. Nor did there appear to be great interest in this execution in the penal colony. At any rate, here in the deep, sandy little valley shut in on every side by naked slopes, there were present, beside the officer and the explorer, only the condemned man—an obtuse, wide-mouthed fellow, with neglected face and hair—and a soldier acting as a guard. The latter held the heavy chain to which were attached the little chains that fettered the offender's ankles and wrists as well as his neck, and which were themselves linked together by connecting chains. As a matter of fact, however, the condemned man looked so dog-like and submissive, one had the impression that he might be allowed to run freely about the slopes, and that, when the execution was about to begin, one would have only to whistle for him to come right back.

The explorer had little thought for the apparatus and started walking up and down behind the condemned man with almost visible indifference. Meanwhile, the officer began the final preparations, now crawling beneath the machine, which was built deep in the ground, now climbing a ladder in order to inspect the upper parts. These were tasks which could easily have been left to a mechanic, but the officer performed them with great zeal, either because he was a special advocate of this apparatus, or because for other reasons the work could not be entrusted to anyone else. 'Now everything's ready,' he finally called out and climbed down the ladder. He was exceedingly fatigued, breathing with his mouth wide open, and had stuck two dainty lady's handkerchiefs under the collar of his uniform. 'These uniforms are much too heavy for the tropics,' commented the explorer,



Instead of making inquiries about the machine, as the officer had expected him to do. 'Certainly,' said the officer, washing his hands, stained with oil and grease, in a pail of water that stood ready nearby, 'but they are the symbols of home, and we don't want to lose our homeland.' 'But take a look at this machine,' he added immediately, as he dried his hands with a towel, pointing at the same time to the apparatus. 'Up till now it still had to be worked by hand; now it works entirely alone.' The explorer nodded and followed the officer. The latter, wanting to safeguard himself against all eventualities, said: 'Of course disturbances do occur; I hope there will be none today, yet we must always reckon with one. For the apparatus has to run for twelve consecutive hours. But if there should be any disturbances, they will only be insignificant ones, and they will be repaired at once.'

'Don't you want to sit down?' he finally asked, and choosing a wicker chair from a heap of others, he offered it to the explorer, who could not refuse. He was now sitting on the edge of a pit, into which he cast a fugitive glance. It was not very deep. On one side of the pit the turned-up earth had been heaped into a wall: on the other side stood the machine. 'I don't know,' said the officer, 'if the commanding officer has already explained the apparatus to you.' The explorer made a vague gesture of the hand; the officer asked nothing better, for now he could explain the apparatus himself. 'This machine,' he said, grasping the crankshaft, on which he was leaning, 'is an invention of our former commanding officer. I collaborated with him in the early experiments and took part in all the stages of the work up till the end. But credit for the invention belongs to him alone. Have you ever heard of our former commander? No? Well, I'm not exaggerating when I say that the organizing of the entire penal colony is his work. We who were his friends knew already, at the time of his death, that the organization of the colony was so complete in itself, that his successor, even though he were to have thousand ideas in his head, would not be able to change anything for many years to come, at least. What we foresaw has come about: the new commander has had to recognize this. It's too bad you did not know the former commander. But'—here the officer interrupted himself—'here I am gabbling away, and his apparatus is standing right here before us. It consists, as you see, of three parts. In the course of time, each of these parts has come to be

designated by certain folk names, as it were. The lower one is called the "bed," the upper one the "draughtsman," and the middle one hanging up there is called the "harrow." "The harrow?" asked the explorer. He had not been listening with undivided attention; the sun was much too tightly ensnared in the shadowless valley; it was hard to concentrate one's thoughts. The officer seemed to him all the more admirable, therefore, as he explained his cause so zealously, in his tight dress uniform, heavy with epaulets and hung with gold braid. Moreover, as he spoke he was busying himself with a screwdriver, tightening a screw here and there. The soldier seemed to be in a state of mind similar to that of the explorer. He had tied the condemned man's chain around both his wrists and was now leaning with one hand on his gun, his head drooping from the nape of his neck, indifferent to everything. The explorer was not surprised at this, for the officer was speaking French and certainly neither the soldier nor the condemned man understood French. It was, therefore, all the more striking that the condemned man should nevertheless have made an effort to follow the explanations of the officer. With a kind of sleepy perseverance he continued to direct his glance where the officer happened to be pointing. When the latter was now interrupted by a question from the explorer, he, too, looked, as did the officer, at the explorer.

'Yes, harrow,' said the officer. 'It's a suitable name. The needles are arranged as in a harrow and the whole thing is worked like a harrow, although always on the same spot, and much more artistically. You'll understand it right away, anyhow. The condemned man is laid here on the bed. But I shall first of all describe the apparatus, and after that I'll get the operation itself under way. You will then be able to follow it more easily. Also, there is a cog-wheel in the draughtsman which has gotten too worn down; it makes a creaking noise when it runs so that a person can hardly understand what is being said. Spare parts are hard to get here, too, unfortunately. Well, then, as I said, here's the bed. It is entirely covered with a layer of cotton, the purpose of which you will learn later on. The condemned man is laid on this cotton, belly down and naked, of course; these straps for the hands, these for the feet, these for the throat, so as to fasten him tight. Here, at the head of the bed where, as I said, the man first lies on his face, there is this little ball of felt, which can be easily adjusted so that



goes right into the man's mouth. Its purpose is to prevent his screaming and biting his tongue. Of course, the man must take hold of the ball of felt, since, otherwise, his neck would be broken by the throat-straps.' 'Is this cotton?' asked the explorer, bending forward. 'Why certainly,' said the officer smiling, 'just feel it yourself.' He seized the explorer's hand and guided it across the bed. 'It's a specially prepared cotton, that's why it looks so unfamiliar; I'll have something to say about its purpose later on.' The explorer was already won over a little in favour of the apparatus; he put his hands over his eyes as a protection against the sun and looked up at it. It was a large structure. The bed and the draughtsman were of equal dimensions and looked like two park chests. The draughtsman was placed about two metres above the bed; both were connected at the corners by four brass poles which almost gave forth rays in the sunlight. The harrow was hanging between the chests, on a steel band.

The officer had hardly noticed the explorer's earlier indifference; he became aware, however, that his interest was now awakening; he therefore interrupted his explanations to give the explorer time for undisturbed contemplation. The condemned man imitated the explorer; since he could not place his hand over his eyes, he blinked directly upward.

'So the man lies down,' said the explorer, and he leaned back in his armchair, crossing his legs.

'Yes,' said the officer, pushing his cap back a little and passing his hand over his hot face, 'now listen! Both the bed and the draughtsman have their own electric batteries; the bed needs one for itself, the draughtsman one for the harrow. As soon as the man has been strapped down, the bed is put in motion. It quivers simultaneously from side to side, as well as up and down, in tiny, very rapid vibrations. You will probably have seen similar machines in hospitals; only, in the case of our bed, all the motions are precisely calculated; for they have to be painstakingly accorded to the motions of the harrow. But the execution proper of the sentence is left to this harrow.'

'What is the sentence, anyway?' asked the explorer. 'So you don't know that, either?' said the officer with astonishment, biting his lips. 'Please excuse me; if my explanations are perhaps a bit disjointed, I sincerely beg your pardon. For these explanations are formerly given by the commanding officer; the new

commander, however, has shunned this duty of rank; but that he should have failed to enlighten such an important visitor'—the explorer sought to wave away the mark of honour with both hands, but the officer insisted on the expression—'such an important visitor, about the form of our sentence, is another innovation which—' he had a curse on his lips, but restrained himself and said: 'I was not informed, it is not my fault. As a matter of fact, I am the best qualified to explain our ways of judging, for I carry here'—he tapped his breast pocket—'the original drawings on the subject, made by the former commander.'

'Drawings made by the commander himself?' asked the explorer. 'Did he combine everything in his own person? Was he a soldier, a judge, a builder, a chemist, a draughtsman, all in one?'

'Surely,' said the officer, nodding his head with a fixed, meditative expression. Then he examined his hands: they did not seem to him to be clean enough to touch the drawings; so he went to the pail and washed them once more. Then he took out a small leather brief-case. 'Our sentence does not sound severe,' he said. 'The law which the condemned man broke is written on his body with the harrow. For instance, this offender'—the officer pointed to the condemned man—'will have inscribed on his body: "Honour your Superior".'

The explorer gave a fleeting glance at the man; when the officer pointed towards him, he hung his head and seemed to be concentrating all his powers of hearing on finding out something. But the motions of his tightly-pressed, puffy lips showed clearly that he could understand nothing. The explorer had wanted to ask various questions, but at the sight of the man he only asked: 'Does he know his sentence?' 'No,' the officer said, and wanted to go right ahead with his explanations. But the explorer interrupted him: 'So he does not know his sentence?' 'No,' said the officer again, and he hesitated a moment, as if demanding further justification of his question from the explorer. 'It would be useless to announce it to him,' he said, 'he'll learn it anyway, on his own body.' The explorer was inclined to remain silent, when he felt the condemned man's gaze upon him; it seemed to be asking if he could approve of the procedure described. So the explorer, who had already leaned back, bent forward once more and asked: 'But he certainly must know that he has been condemned, doesn't he?'



‘He doesn’t know that either,’ said the officer, smiling at the explorer, as if expecting further strange disclosures. ‘Well, then,’ said the explorer, passing his hand over his forehead, ‘so this man still does not know how his defence was undertaken?’ ‘He had no opportunity of defending himself,’ said the officer, and looked to one side, as if he were talking to himself and did not want to embarrass the explorer by telling these things which seemed to him self-evident. ‘But he must surely have had a chance to defend himself?’ said the explorer, rising from the armchair.

The officer realized that he was in danger of being held up for some time in his explanation of the apparatus. So he walked over to the explorer, took his arm, pointed towards the condemned man, who, seeing that interest was so obviously directed his way, now stood to attention, while the guard drew the chain tighter. ‘The situation is as follows,’ said the officer. ‘I was appointed judge in the penal colony, despite my youth. For I was assistant to the former commander in all punitive matters and I am the one who knows the machine best. The principle on which I base my decisions is this: There is never any doubt about the guilt! Other courts cannot follow this principle, for they consist of many heads and also have still higher courts over them. Such is not the case here, or at least it was not the case with our former commander. To be sure, the new commander has already shown an inclination to meddle with my decisions, but I have always succeeded so far in warding him off, and I shall continue to do so.—You wanted an explanation of this case: it is as simple as all of them. The captain notified us this morning that this man, who had been assigned to personal service and who slept in front of his door, had fallen asleep while on duty. For it is his duty to get up each time the hour strikes and salute before the captain’s door. This is certainly not a difficult duty, but it is a necessary one, for he must be alert while on guard as well as while serving his superior. Last night the captain wanted to see if the servant was doing his duty. He opened the door at two o’clock sharp and found him asleep in a slouching position. He took his riding whip and lashed the man across the face. Now, instead of getting up and asking forgiveness, the man seized his superior by the legs, shook him, and shouted: ‘Throw that whip away, or I’ll eat you up.’ These are the facts. The captain came to me an hour ago. I wrote down his statement and added the sentence immediately. Then I ordered the man to

be put in chains. That was all very simple. If I had called the man first and questioned him, it would have only resulted in confusion. He would have lied, then, if I had succeeded in contradicting the first lies, he would have replaced these with new ones, and so forth. But now I've got hold of him, and I'll not let him go.—Is everything clear now? But time passes, the execution should have begun, and I am not yet through with the explanation of the apparatus.' He forced the explorer back into his armchair, went back over to the machine and began: 'As you see, this harrow corresponds to the form of a human being; here is the harrow for the upper part of the body, here are the harrows for the legs. For the head, this little burin alone is designated. Have I made myself clear?' He bent amiably towards the explorer, prepared to give the most exhaustive explanations.

The explorer looked at the harrow with wrinkled forehead. The information about the court proceedings had not satisfied him. After all, he was forced to tell himself, this was a penal colony; special measures were necessary here, and they were obliged to proceed according to military regulations up to the very last detail. Besides, he placed some hope in the new commander, who obviously intended to introduce—slowly, to be sure,—a new procedure which could not penetrate the limited mind of the officer. This train of thought led the explorer to ask: 'Is the commander going to attend the execution?' 'That's not certain,' said the officer, painfully affected by the unmotivated question, and his friendly expression became distorted. 'That's exactly why we have to hurry,' he continued, 'I shall even have to cut my explanations short, as much as I regret to do so. But then I might add further explanations tomorrow, when the apparatus will have been cleaned again—the fact that it gets so dirty is its only defect. So now I'll give you only the most essential facts.—When the man lies on the bed and it has been made to vibrate, the harrow is lowered on to the body. Of itself it assumes a position that permits the sharp points just barely to touch the body; once it is in place, the steel cord tautens at once into a rod. And then the play begins. The uninitiated notice no external difference in the penalties. The harrow appears to be working uniformly. Tremblingly it sticks its points into the body, which has begun to tremble too, because of the bed. To make it possible for everyone to verify the execution of the sentence, the harrow was made of glass. A few



mechanical difficulties had to be surmounted in order to fasten the needles into it, but we finally succeeded after many attempts. I simply spared no pains. And now everyone can watch the progress of the writing on the body through the glass. Would a mind coming nearer to look at the needles?’

Slowly the explorer rose, walked over and bent over the harrow. ‘You can see,’ said the officer, ‘two kinds of needles in different arrangements. Each long one has a short one next to it. The long one writes and the short one sprays water in order to wash off the blood, and so keep the writing always clear. The body water is then conducted into little drains and finally flows into this principal drain which has an overflow pipe leading into the ditch.’ The officer pointed out the exact direction which the blood-water had to take. As he held both hands to the mouth of the overflow-pipe in order best to illustrate his point, the explorer turned his head and, groping behind him, was about to return to his seat. At that moment he saw to his horror that the condemned man, like himself, had acted on the invitation of the officer to inspect closely the construction of the harrow. He had dragged the waxy guard a little way forward with his chain, and was also looking over the glass. He could be seen looking with uncertainty for the thing the two gentlemen had just been examining, because he lacked the explanation, he was not successful. He turned first to one side, then to the other. Again and again his eyes looked over the glass. The explorer wanted to push him back, for what he was doing was probably punishable. But the officer held the explorer back with one hand, took a clod of earth from the harrow with the other and threw it at the guard. The latter lifted his head suddenly, saw what the condemned man had dared to do, dropped his gun and, digging his heels into the ground, he pushed the condemned man back so that he fell right over. The officer looked down at the man as he writhed and clanked his chains. ‘Stand him up straight!’ the officer shouted, for he noticed that the explorer’s attention was far too diverted by the offender. What’s more, the explorer was bending across the harrow, without bothering about it, intent only on finding out what was going to happen to the condemned man. ‘Handle him carefully,’ the officer shouted again. He ran around the apparatus, seized the condemned man, whose feet kept slipping from under him, by the shoulders and stood him upright, with the help of the guard.

'Now I know everything,' said the explorer when the officer came back again to him. 'Except the most important part,' said the latter, and, grasping the explorer by the arm, he pointed upward. 'There, in the draughtsman is the clockwork that determines the motions of the harrow, and this clockwork is regulated according to the drawing called for by the sentence. I still use the sketches made by the former commanding officer. Here they are—he pulled a few sheets out of his leather brief-case—but unfortunately, I cannot let you take them in your hand, for they are my most precious possessions. Please sit down, I'll show them to you from the distance, so that you may see everything well. He showed him the first page. The explorer would have liked to say a word of approval, but he saw only labyrinthine lines that frequently crossed and re-crossed each other and covered the paper so densely that one could recognize only with difficulty the white spaces in between. 'Please read this,' said the officer. 'I cannot,' said the explorer. 'Why, it's perfectly clear,' said the officer. 'It is undoubtedly very artistic,' said the explorer evasively, 'but I cannot decipher it.' 'Of course,' said the officer, laughing, as he put the brief-case away, 'it's not fine penmanship for school children. You have to pore over it for a long while. In the end you too would certainly make it out. Naturally it can't be ordinary handwriting, for it is not supposed to kill at once, but within an average space of twelve hours; the turning-point being calculated for the sixth hour. The writing proper has to be surrounded by many, many embellishments; the real writing only encircles the body in a narrow girdle; the rest of the body is intended for decorative effects. Can you now understand the value of the work of the harrow, and of the entire machine? Just look at this!' He jumped on to the ladder, turned a wheel and called down: 'Look out! step aside!' Everything began to move. If the wheel had not creaked, it would have been wonderful. As surprised by this disturbing wheel, the officer threatened it with his fist, then, excusing himself, stretched his arms out towards the explorer and hurriedly climbed down in order to observe the action of the apparatus from below. Something was still out of order which he alone noticed. He climbed up again, grasped the inner part of the draughtsman with both hands and then, in order to get down quickly, instead of using the ladder, slid down on the rods. To make himself understood above the noise, he



uted as loudly as possible into the ear of the explorer: 'Do you understand what's happening now? The harrow is beginning to write: when it has finished the first inscription on the man's back, the layer of cotton begins to furl up and rolls the body slowly over its side so as to present a fresh surface to the harrow. In the meantime, the wound-written parts take their place on the cotton, which stops the bleeding at once, by means of a special preparation, and makes further deepening of the writing possible. Just as the spikes on the edge of the harrow tear the cotton from the wounds, as the body is turned over again, hurl it into the ditch, and the harrow starts working again. Thus it writes more and more deeply during the whole twelve hours. The first six hours the condemned man lives about as before, he only suffers pain. After two hours the piece of felt is removed, for the man hasn't the strength to scream any more. Here, at the head end, we serve warm rice porridge into this electrically-heated tray, from which the man, if he cares to, can eat whatever he can lap up with his tongue. None of them ever misses this opportunity. I know fully of none, and my experience is great. Only around the sixth hour does he lose his pleasure in eating. Then I usually kneel down and observe the following phenomenon. Rarely does the man swallow the last morsel. All he does is to turn it about in his mouth and spit it out into the ditch. I have to stoop over then, otherwise I would catch it in the face. But around the sixth hour how quiet the man becomes! Even the dullest begins to understand. It starts around the eyes. From here it spreads out. It's a temptation which could tempt you to lie down under the harrow with him. But nothing further happens, the man is just beginning to decipher the writing, and he purses his lips as if listening. You have seen that it is not easy to decipher the writing with the eye; our man deciphers it with his wounds. Of course, that means a great deal of work; he needs six hours to accomplish it. Then the harrow tears him clean through and hurls him into the ditch, where he plunges down into the bloody water and cotton. The tribunal adjourns and we, the soldier and I, shovel him under.'

The explorer had bent his ear to the officer and, with his hands in his coat pockets, observed the work of the machine. The condemned man was also observing it but without comprehension. He leaned over a little to follow the oscillating needles, when the officer, at a sign from the officer, slashed his shirt and trousers from

behind with a knife so that they fell down off him. The man tried to seize the falling garments in order to cover his nakedness, but the soldier lifted him into the air and shook the last shreds from him. The officer brought the machine to a standstill and in the silence that now reigned the condemned man was placed under the harrow. The chains were undone and straps fastened in the place. Just at first it seemed almost to spell relief for the condemned man. Then the harrow settled down a bit lower, for he was a thin man. When the points touched him, a shudder ran over his skin; while the guard was busy with his right hand, he reached out blindly with his left; but it was towards where the explorer was standing. Uninterruptedly the officer kept looking at the explorer from the side, as if trying to read on his face the impression that the execution, which he had explained to him at least superficially, was making on him.

The strap intended for the wrist broke; the guard had probably pulled on it too hard. The guard showed him the broken bit of strap and the officer was obliged to help. Turning his face toward the explorer, he walked over to the guard and said: 'This machine is quite complicated, here and there something is bound to tear or break; but one should not for this reason allow oneself to be misled as to one's general judgment. As a matter of fact, a substitute for the strap may be had promptly; I am going to use a chain, only the delicacy of the vibration of the right arm will in that case of course be reduced.' And as he attached the chain, he added: 'The means at my disposal for the upkeep of the machine are very limited now. Under the former commander there existed a fund intended only for this purpose, to which I had free access. There was also a warehouse here in which all kinds of spare parts were kept. I confess I was almost wasteful with them, I mean formerly, not now, as the new commander—to whom everything is only a pretext for combatting old institutions—asserts. Now he administers the Machine Fund himself, and whenever I send for a new strap the broken one is required as proof, the new one takes ten days to arrive, then it's of poor quality and not worth much. But in the meantime how am I to make the machine go without straps? Nobody bothers about that!'

The explorer reflected: It is always a delicate matter to intervene effectively in other people's affairs. He was neither a citizen of the penal colony nor a citizen of the state to which it belonged. If he



wanted to condemn the execution, or even to prevent it, they could say to him: You are a foreigner, be silent. To this he would not be able to reply other than to add that as far as this matter was concerned, he didn't understand it himself, for he was travelling with the sole intention of observing and certainly not with that of changing foreign court procedures. But here, however, the situation appeared to be very tempting. There was no doubt about the injustice of the proceedings and the inhumanity of the execution. Nobody would assume that the explorer had any personal interest in the matter, for the condemned man was a stranger to him. They were not compatriots, nor was he at all a man who invited pity. The explorer himself had recommendations from high officials, he had been received with great courtesy, and the fact that he had been asked to the execution seemed even to indicate that they might desire his opinion concerning this procedure. This was all the more likely, in fact, since the commanding officer, as he had just heard distinctly, was not a partisan of this procedure and maintained an almost hostile attitude towards the officer.

At that moment the explorer heard a cry of rage from the officer. Not without difficulty he had just succeeded in shoving the felt gag into the mouth of the offender, when the latter closed his eyes in an irresistible nausea and vomited. Hurriedly the officer wrenching him away from the gag and tried to turn his head towards the ditch; but it was too late, the slop was already running all over the machine. 'All this is the commander's fault!' the officer cried, and shook the brass rods in front without rhyme or reason. 'They're getting my machine as filthy as a stable.' His hands shaking, he showed the explorer what had happened. 'Haven't I tried for hours to make the commander understand that no meals should be given for a day before the execution? But the new, lenient tendency disagrees. The ladies of the commander's family stuff the man's mouth with sweets before he is led away. All his life he has fed on stinking fish, and now he has to eat candy! But it certainly would be possible, I wouldn't object, why on earth don't they get a new felt gag, as I have urged for the last three months? How can anyone take into his mouth, without loathing, a gag on which more than a hundred dying men have sucked and bitten?'

The condemned man had laid his head back and looked very

peaceful, the guard was busy cleaning the machine with the condemned man's shirt. The officer walked towards the explorer, who took a step backwards in some sort of premonition, but the officer took his hand and drew him to one side. 'I want to say a few words to you in confidence,' he said, 'may I?' 'Certainly,' said the explorer, and listened, his eyes lowered.

'This procedure and this execution, which you now have the opportunity to admire, no longer have any open adherents in our colony at present. I am their only advocate, as well as the only advocate of the old commander's legacy. I am no longer able to consider further improvements of the procedure, I exhaust all my strength trying to preserve what already exists. During the old commander's lifetime, the colony was filled with his adherents; I possess some of his strength of conviction, but I entirely lack his power; in consequence, the adherents have slipped away. There are still a good many, but nobody admits it. If you go to the tea-house today, that is on an execution day, and listen around a bit, you will perhaps hear only ambiguous utterances. These people are all adherents, but they are quite useless to me under the present commander with his present views. And now I ask you: Shall such a lifework as this'—here he pointed to the machine—'be allowed to perish just because of this commander and the women in his family who influence him? Can we allow this? Even though one is only on our island for a few days, as a stranger? But there is no time to lose, there is something afoot to undermine my jurisdiction; discussions are already taking place in the commander's office to which I am not summoned. Even your visit today seems to me to be characteristic of the entire situation; they are cowards, so they send you, a stranger, ahead of them.—How different the executions were in the old days! Already, a day before the execution, the entire valley was overcrowded with people; they all came just to watch; early in the morning the commander appeared with his ladies; a flourish of trumpets awakened the entire encampment; I made the announcement that everything was ready; the society people—no high official was allowed to be absent—took their places around the machine; this heap of wicker chairs is a miserable relic of those times. The machine was freshly painted and shone brightly, I used new spare parts for almost every execution. Before hundreds of eyes—all the spectators stood on tip-toe as far back as those slopes over there—the condemned



an was laid under the harrow by the commander himself. What common soldier is allowed to do today was then my task, as residing judge, and I felt honoured by it. And now the execution began! Not a single discord disturbed the work of the machine. Many stopped looking, even, and just lay there in the sand with their eyes closed. Everybody realized: Justice is now being done. In the stillness only the sighing of the condemned man, muffled by the felt, could be heard. Today the machine no longer succeeds in wringing from the condemned man a sigh that is sufficiently loud for the felt not to stifle it. In those days, however, the writing needles dripped a corrosive liquid which we are not allowed to use today. Well, then came the sixth hour! It was impossible to want all the petitions to be allowed to witness the spectacle from close by. The commander in his wisdom gave orders that the children should be considered first; of course, I was always allowed to stand close by on account of my position; many's the time I used to crouch there with a small child in each arm. How all absorbed the expression of transfiguration from the man's tortured face, how we lifted our cheeks into the glow of this justice, finally achieved and already fading! What times those were, comrade!' The officer had evidently forgotten who it was standing before him; he had embraced the explorer and laid his head on his shoulder. The latter was greatly embarrassed and looked impatiently beyond the officer. The guard had finished the cleaning job and was now pouring rice porridge from a can into the tray. The condemned man, who seemed to have almost completely recovered, no sooner noticed this than he began to peck with his tongue for the porridge. The guard kept shoving him away, for the porridge was undoubtedly intended for a later moment, but it was nevertheless unseemly for him to put his dirty hands in the tray and eat out of it in front of the ravenous offender. The officer quickly pulled himself together. 'I was not really going to touch your emotions,' he said. 'I know it is impossible to make those times comprehensible today. Besides, the machine still works and can speak for itself. It speaks for itself, even when it is standing all alone in this valley. And in the end, the corpse still flies with an unbelievably gentle flying motion into the ditch, even though there are no longer hundreds to gather around the ditch like flies, as there used to be. At that time we had to put up a strong fence around the ditch, but that has been torn down long ago.'

The explorer looked aimlessly about him, wanting to keep his face from the officer. The latter, thinking he was looking at the barrenness of the valley, seized his hands and walked around him in order to catch his glance: 'Do you see the shame of it?' he said.

But the explorer remained silent. For a little while the officer left him alone; with outspread legs and his hands on his hips, he stood still, looking at the ground. Then he smiled encouragingly at the explorer and said: 'I was standing nearby yesterday, when the commander gave you the invitation. I heard it. I know the commander, I understood at once what he had in mind with that invitation. Although his power would be sufficient to take measures against me, he does not yet dare do so; but he wants to expose me to your judgment, as being that of a distinguished foreigner. He has made a careful calculation; this is your second day on the island, you did not know the old commander and his thought processes, you are prejudiced by the European point of view, you are perhaps, on principle, an opponent of capital punishment in general, and of such a machine-like type of execution in particular; furthermore you see how the execution takes place, without public sympathy, sadly, on a machine that is already somewhat damaged; now would it not be easily possible—this is what the commander thinks—that you should not approve of my procedure? And if you did not approve of it, would you not keep silent about it—I am still speaking from the commander's point of view—for you certainly have complete confidence in your own much-tried convictions? You have surely seen and learned to appreciate the different peculiarities of many peoples, therefore you will in all probability not speak out with all your might against the procedure as you would, perhaps, do in your own country. But that isn't at all necessary for the commander. A haphazard, merely an incautious word suffices. It need not in any way correspond to your convictions, if only it appears to meet with his wishes. I am sure he will question you with all the cunning he possesses. And the ladies will sit around in a circle, all ears. You'll probably say: "In our country the court proceedings are different," or, "In our country the accused is examined before judgment is pronounced," or, "In our country there are other penalties than the death penalty," or, "In our country there have been no tortures since the Middle Ages". These are all observations that are as right as they appear self-evident to you;



innocent observations that do not touch my procedure. But how will the commander take them? I can see him now, our friend the commander, as he pushes his chair aside and hurries to the balcony. I can see his ladies flocking after him. I can hear his voice—the ladies call it a thunder voice—as he says: “A great occidental researcher designated to examine court proceedings in many countries, has just announced that our procedure in accordance with old customs is an inhuman one. After this judgment, pronounced by such a distinguished man, it is, of course, no longer possible for me to tolerate this method. Beginning today, I therefore issue the following order—and so forth.” You want to protest, you did not really say what he announces you did, you did not call my method inhuman; on the contrary, in your innermost thoughts you regard it as the most human and most worthy of humanity; you also admire this mechanism—but it is too late; you can’t even reach the balcony, which is already crowded with ladies; you try to attract attention, you try to shout, but a lady’s hand holds your mouth shut—and I, and the old commander’s work, are lost.’

The explorer had to suppress a smile; so the task he had regarded as being so difficult was really as easy as that. He said evasively: “You over-estimate my influence; the commander has read my paper of introduction; he knows that I am no connoisseur of court proceedings. If I were to express an opinion, it would be the opinion of a private individual, of no more importance than that of anyone else, and certainly much less important than that of the commander who, unless I am mistaken, has very extensive powers in this penal colony. If his opinion concerning this procedure is such a positive one as you believe, then, I am afraid that the end is indeed here, without there being any need of my slightest co-operation.’

Did the officer understand this? No, he did not yet understand. He shook his head vigorously and threw a brief glance back at the condemned man and the soldier, who was startled and let go of the rice. The officer came quite near the explorer, and without looking at him directly but at something or other on his coat, spoke more softly than before: ‘You don’t know the commander; I am, as it were, under no obligations—if you’ll pardon my expression—to him, or to us all. Believe me, your influence cannot be too highly estimated. I was indeed delighted when I

heard that you were to attend the execution alone. This order of the commander was aimed at me, but now I am going to turn it to my own advantage. Uninfluenced by false insinuations and contemptuous looks—which would have been inevitable with a larger attendance at the execution—you have listened to my explanations, you have seen the machine and are now about to witness the execution. Surely your judgment is already formed; should there still be a few uncertainties in your mind, the sight of the execution will do away with them. And now I make this plea to you: help me with the commander!

The explorer did not allow him to continue. 'But how could I do that?' he cried. 'That's quite impossible. I am as powerless to help you as to hinder you.'

'You certainly can,' said the officer. The explorer noticed somewhat anxiously that the officer's fists were clenched. 'You certainly can,' he repeated, still more insistently. 'I have a plan that must succeed. You believe your influence is insufficient. I know it is sufficient. But allowing that you're right, isn't it necessary then to try everything, even what may possibly fail, in order to maintain this procedure? So listen to my plan. In order to carry it out, it is above all necessary for you to be as reticent as possible concerning your judgment of this procedure in the colony today. Unless someone questions you directly, you must by no means say anything; your utterances should be brief and vague; people should notice that it becomes increasingly difficult for you to talk about it, that you are acrimonious, that you practically have to burst into invective, were you to talk openly. I don't ask you to lie, in any sense; you should give only the briefest answers, such as: "Yes, I've seen the execution," or, "Yes, I've heard all the explanations". Only that, no more. Of course there is sufficient cause for the acrimony people should notice in you even though it does not correspond to the commander's viewpoint. Of course, he will misunderstand completely and give it his own interpretation. That is the basis of my plan. Tomorrow an important meeting of all the higher administrative officers will take place under the chairmanship of the commander at headquarters. The commander naturally knows how to make a spectacle out of these sessions. A gallery has been built which is always occupied by spectators. I am obliged to attend these consultations, but I am loath to do so. In any case, you will certainly

invited to this meeting; if you will follow my plan today, the invitation will become an urgent request. Should you not be invited, however, for some undiscoverable reason, you must ask for an invitation; you will get it then without any doubt. So tomorrow you're seated with the ladies in the commander's box. He reassures himself frequently, by looking upward, that you are there. After disposing of diverse indifferent and ludicrous subjects, speculated solely to interest the spectators—mostly about port instructions, eternally about port constructions—the court procedure also comes up for discussion. If this point should not occur to the commander, or rather not early enough, I'll see to it that it does. I'll stand up and make a report of today's execution. Quite brief, only a report. Such a report is not customary, but I make it nevertheless. The commander thanks me, as always, with a friendly smile; and then he cannot restrain himself, he sees his chance: "A report of today's execution has just been made," he will say, or something similar to this. "I'd only like to add to this report that this particular execution was attended by the great scholar, whose visit—an exceptional honour for our colony—we all know about. Our session today also takes on an added significance as a result of his presence. Let us now question this great scholar as to his opinion of this execution, carried out in accordance with early customs, as well as of the procedure that came up to it." Naturally, applause throughout the house, and general approval; I am the loudest. The commander makes a bow before you and says: "Then I put the question in the name of everyone present." And now you step up to the balustrade. Lay your hands on it, so that they are visible to everybody, otherwise the ladies will take hold of them and dally with your fingers. And now, finally, comes a word from you. I don't know how I shall spend the tension of the hours until that moment. You must place a limit on your speech, blare forth the truth; lean over the balustrade, bellow your opinion, yes, bellow it, at the commander, your unshakable opinion! But maybe you don't want to do this, maybe it does not correspond to your character; in your country people act differently in such situations; this too is right; this too is quite sufficient; don't get up at all, say only a few words, whisper them so that they may be heard by the officials below you, that'll do. You needn't even mention the full attendance at the execution, the creaking wheel, the broken



strap, the repulsive felt gag; no, I'll take care of everything else. And, believe me, if my speech doesn't chase him from the hall it'll force him to his knees, so that he will have to acknowledge I bow down before you, old commander! That's my plan; won't you help me to carry it out? But of course you will, what's more, you must.' And the officer seized the explorer by both arms and looked into his face, breathing heavily. He had shouted the last sentences so loudly that even the guard and the condemned man became attentive; although they understood nothing, they stopped eating and looked towards the explorer, chewing the while.

The explorer had no doubt from the very beginning as to the answer he would have to give. He had experienced too much in his life to vacillate now; at bottom he was an honest man, and he was not afraid. Nevertheless, he hesitated, just the time of a breath, at the sight of the soldier and the condemned man. But finally he said what he had to say: 'No,' The officer blinked several times and did not take his eyes off him. 'Do you want an explanation?' asked the explorer. The officer nodded silently. 'I am opposed to this procedure,' the explorer then said. 'Before you even took me into your confidence—I'll not abuse this confidence of course, under any circumstances—I had already considered whether I would be justified in taking steps against this procedure and whether there would be the slightest prospect of success in case I did so. It was clear to me to whom I should have to turn first: to the commander, of course. You have made it still clearer but without having strengthened my resolution; on the contrary your honest conviction moves me, even though it could never influence me.'

The officer remained silent, turned to the machine and, seizing one of the brass rods, leaned slightly backwards to look up at the draughtsman, as if to check whether or not everything was in order. The guard and the condemned man seemed to have become friends; the condemned man was making signs to the guard despite the fact that the tight straps which bound him made this difficult; the soldier bent over towards him; the condemned man whispered something to him and the soldier nodded.

The explorer followed the officer: 'You don't know yet what I am going to do,' he said. 'Of course, I shall give my opinion about the procedure to the commander, not at the meeting

however, but tête-à-tête; nor shall I stay here long enough to be drawn into any meeting; I am going away early tomorrow morning, or at least I'll board ship then.

It seemed as though the officer had been listening. 'So the procedure did not convince you,' he said to himself, and smiled as an old man smiles at a child's nonsense, withholding his own real thoughts behind the smile.

'Then the time has come,' he said finally, and looked suddenly at the explorer, his eyes shining with a certain challenge, a certain appeal for co-operation. 'Time for what?' the explorer asked anxiously, but received no answer.

'You're free,' said the officer to the condemned man in the latter's own language. At first the condemned man did not believe it. 'You're free now,' the officer said. The face of the condemned man showed signs of life for the first time. Was this the truth? Or was it only a passing whim on the part of the officer? Had the foreign explorer obtained pardon for him? Which was it? His face seemed to ask these questions. But not for long. Whatever might be, if he could, he really wanted to be free, and he began to shake himself as much as the harrow permitted.

'You're breaking my straps,' the officer shouted. 'Keep quiet, we'll unfasten them for you.' And with the help of the guard, to whom he had made a sign, he got to work. The condemned man buckled gently to himself, saying nothing; he turned his face first to the left towards the officer, then to the right towards the guard; not forgetting the explorer.

'Pull him out,' the officer ordered the guard. To do this, they were obliged to move with a certain caution, on account of the harrow. The condemned man, due to his impatience, already had a few slight lacerations on his back.

From this moment on, however, the officer hardly bothered about him any more. He walked over to the explorer, took out again his small leather brief-case, rummaged through it, finally found the paper he was looking for and showed it to the explorer. 'Read this,' he said. 'I can't,' said the explorer. 'I told you before I can't read those pages.' 'But take a good look at the page anyway,' said the officer, stepping to the explorer's side to read with him. When this did not help, either, in order to facilitate the explorer's reading, he ran his little finger across the page, well above it, as if the paper must not be touched under any condition.

The explorer made an effort, in order to be agreeable to the officer at least in this, but it was impossible. Now the officer began to spell out the writing, then he read it once more connectedly. 'It says: "BE JUST!"—Now you can read it,' he said. The explorer bent so low over the paper that the officer drew it back, fearing he might touch it; actually the explorer said nothing more, but it was clear that he still had not been able to read it. 'It says: "BE JUST!"' the officer repeated. 'That may be so', said the explorer, 'I believe that's what it says.' 'All right, then,' said the officer, at least partially satisfied, and he climbed the ladder still holding the page; with great caution he laid it on the draughtsman, and then began apparently to rearrange the entire mechanism; it was a very tedious job, for the wheels in question must have been very tiny; sometimes his head disappeared completely in the draughtsman, he was obliged to examine the wheelwork so closely.

The explorer continued to follow the work from below, his neck grew stiff, his eyes began to smart from the sunlight-flooded sky. The guard and the condemned man were now occupied only with each other. With the point of his bayonet, the guard lifted up the condemned man's shirt and trousers which were lying in the ditch. The shirt was frightfully dirty, and the condemned man washed it in the water-pail. Both had to laugh aloud when the condemned man put the shirt and trousers on, for both garments had been slashed in two behind. Perhaps the offender thought it his duty to entertain the guard; in his slit clothes he made circles around the guard, who was crouching on the ground, laughing and beating his knees. Nevertheless, they restrained themselves somewhat, out of respect for the presence of the two gentlemen.

When the officer had finally finished up above, he smilingly surveyed the whole in all its parts once more, banged shut the cover of the draughtsman, which until now had been open, climbed down and looked first into the ditch, then at the condemned man; noticed with satisfaction that the latter had recovered his garments, walked towards the pail to wash his hands, recognized too late the repulsive filth in it, became saddened at the fact that now he could not wash his hands, at last dipped his fingers in the sand—this substitute did not suffice, but he had to accommodate himself—then rose and began to unbutton the coat of his uniform. At this, the two lady's handkerchiefs which he had stuck in his collar, fell into his hands. 'Here,



'Take your handkerchiefs,' he said, and threw them towards the condemned man. In explanation he said to the explorer: 'Gifts from the ladies.'

In spite of the evident hurry with which he took off his coat and then undressed completely, he nevertheless handled each garment very carefully. He even let his fingers run over the silver cord on his tunic and shook one of the tassels straight. Yet it was little in keeping with this carefulness that, as soon as he had finished handling a garment, he immediately threw it into the ditch, with an angry gesture. The last thing that remained was his small sword and belt. He drew the sword from its scabbard, broke it, then gathered everything together—the pieces of the sword, the scabbard and the belt—and threw them away so violently that they clinked together in the ditch.

Now he stood there naked. The explorer bit his lips and said nothing. To be sure, he knew what was going to happen, yet he had no right to prevent the officer from doing anything. If the court procedure to which the officer was so attached really was about to be abolished—possibly as a consequence of the action which the explorer had felt obliged to take—then the officer was acting entirely rightly; the explorer would not have acted differently in his place.

The guard and the condemned man understood nothing at first; in the beginning, they did not even look on. The condemned man was overjoyed at having got back his pocket handkerchiefs, but he was not allowed to enjoy them very long, for the soldier snatched them away from him with a quick, unpredictable gesture. The condemned man now tried once more to pull the handkerchiefs from the soldier's belt, into which the latter had carefully put them, but the soldier was on his guard. So they struggled, half in jest. Only when the officer was completely drunk did they pay any attention to him. The condemned man especially seemed to be seized with a foreboding of some great change. What had happened to him, was now happening to the officer. It might even go on to the very end. Most likely, the foreign explorer had given the order for it. So this was revenge. Without himself having suffered to the end, he was nevertheless avenged to the end. A broad, noiseless laughter appeared now on his face, and remained there.

The officer turned towards the machine. If it had already been

clear before that he understood the machine well, it was now almost horrifying to see the way he took charge of it, and the way it obeyed him. He had hardly brought his hand near the harrow when it rose and sank several times until it had reached the right position to receive him; he took hold of the bed by the edge only, and it started to vibrate right away; the ball of felt came toward his mouth. One saw that the officer did not really want to take it, but his hesitancy lasted just a moment, he submitted at once and took it in his mouth. Everything was ready, only the straps were still hanging down at the sides, but they were obviously unnecessary, as the officer did not need to be strapped in. Then the condemned man noticed the hanging straps; in his opinion the execution would not be complete unless the straps were tightly fastened; he waved excitedly to the guard and both of them ran to buckle the officer in. The latter had already stretched out one foot in order to push the crank that was to start the draughtsman going; then he saw that the two men had come near him. He drew his foot back and let himself be strapped in. Now, however, he was no longer able to reach the crank; neither the guard nor the condemned man would be able to find it, and the explorer was determined not to make a move. This was not necessary; hardly had the straps been fastened, when the machine began to work; the bed trembled, the needles danced on the skin, the harrow swung up and down. The explorer had been staring at it quite a while before he remembered that a wheel in the draughtsman should have made a creaking noise; yet all was silent, not the slightest hum was to be heard.

Because of the silent action the machine ceased to be the focus of attention. The explorer looked over towards the soldier and the condemned man. The latter was the more lively of the two, everything about the machine interested him; first he would bend down, then he would stretch himself, holding his index finger constantly extended to point out something to the guard. The explorer felt uncomfortable. He was determined to remain there till the end, but he could not have borne the sight of the two men very long. 'Go home,' he said. The soldier would, perhaps have been ready to go, but the condemned man considered the order as a sort of punishment. He begged and implored with clasped hands to be allowed to stay, and when the explorer, shaking his head, refused to give in, he even went on his knees. The explorer saw that

orders were of no avail here and he was about to go over and drive the two of them away. At that moment he heard a noise up in the draughtsman. He looked up. Could that one cog-wheel be giving trouble? But it was something else. Slowly the cover of the draughtsman rose and then fell wide open. The teeth of a cog-wheel began to show, then rose up; soon the whole wheel appeared; it was as if some great force were pressing the draughtsman together so that there was no room left for this wheel; it kept rotating till it reached the edge of the draughtsman, fell down, reeled upright a bit in the sand, then lay there. But already another one rose up above, followed by many more, big ones, little ones, and others that could hardly be told apart; the same thing happened to them all, one kept thinking that the draughtsman must surely be emptied by now, when a new, particularly numerous lot appeared, rose up, fell down, reeled in the sand and lay there. At the sight of this occurrence the condemned man forgot all about the explorer's orders; the cog-wheels completely fascinated him; he kept trying to seize one of them, at the same time urging the soldier to help him; but he withdrew his hand in fright, for another cog-wheel always followed at once, and this, at least at first when it would come rolling towards him, frightened him.

The explorer, however, was very disturbed; the machine was evidently going to pieces; its quiet action was a delusion; he had the feeling that he would have to care for the officer now, since the latter was no longer able to care for himself. But while the dropping of the cog-wheels had claimed his entire attention, he had neglected to watch the rest of the machine; now, however, when the last cog-wheel had left the draughtsman, he bent over the harrow, only to have a fresh, more annoying surprise. The harrow was not writing, it was just sticking the body, nor was the bed rolling it but just lifting it, trembling, up to the needles. The explorer wanted to interfere and, if possible, bring the whole thing to a stop, for this was not the torture the officer had wanted to arrive at, this was outright murder. He stretched out his hands. But at that moment, the harrow was already beginning to rise sideways with the impaled body, the way it usually did only at the twelfth hour. Blood was flowing in a hundred streams, un-mixed with water, for the little water pipes had also failed this time. And now the last thing failed too, the body did not release itself from the long needles, but, bleeding profusely, hung over



the ditch without falling into it. The harrow was ready to fall back into its usual position, but, as if it had noticed itself that it was not yet freed of its burden, it remained suspended above the ditch. 'Why don't you help?' the explorer shouted over to the guard and the condemned man, as he, himself, seized the officer's feet. He tried to hold the feet down on his side and the other two were to take hold of the officer's head from the other side, so that he might be slowly lifted off the needles. But the two could not make up their minds to join him; the condemned man practically turned away; the explorer had to go over to them and force them to come over near the officer's head. Just here he saw the face of the corpse, almost against his will. It was as it had been in life; no sign of the promised redemption was to be detected; that which all the others had found in the machine, the officer had not found; his lips were tightly pressed together, his eyes were open, and had an expression of life; their look was calm and convinced; the point of the big iron prong pierced his forehead.

When the explorer reached the first houses of the colony, with the soldier and the condemned man behind him, the soldier pointed at one house and said: 'That's the tea-house.'

On the ground floor of one house there was a deep, low, cavernous room with smoke-stained walls and ceiling. On the street side it was wide open. Although the tea-house differed little from the other houses in the colony, which were all very run-down, with the exception of the palatial structures that housed headquarters, it nevertheless gave the impression to the explorer of an historic memory, and he felt the power of other days. He walked nearer and, followed by his companions, he passed between the unoccupied tables standing on the street before the tea-house, and inhaled the cool, musty air which came from the inside. 'The old man's buried here,' said the soldier. 'The priest refused him a place in the cemetery. At first they were undecided as to where to bury him, but they finally buried him here. I'm sure the officer did not tell you anything about it, for that was the thing he was most ashamed of. He even tried a few times to disinter the old man at night, but he was always chased away.' 'Where is the grave?' asked the explorer, who found it hard to believe the guard. Both the guard and the condemned man immediately dashed ahead of him and with outstretched hands

pointed to the spot where the grave was to be found. They led the explorer straight to the back wall where customers were sitting at a few of the tables. They were probably longshoremen, sturdy looking men with short, glossy, full black beards. All of them were coatless, their shirts torn; they were poor humble folk. As the explorer approached, several of them rose, flattened themselves up against the wall and looked in his direction. 'He's a foreigner,' was the whisper that went about the explorer, 'he wants to see the grave.' They shoved one of the tables aside, underneath which there really was a tombstone. It was a simple slab, low enough to be hidden under the table. On it was an inscription in quite small letters, to read which the explorer was obliged to kneel down. It read: 'HERE LIES THE OLD COMMANDER. HIS ADHERENTS, WHO MAY NO LONGER BEAR A NAME, HAVE DUG THIS GRAVE FOR HIM AND ERECTED THIS STONE. THERE EXISTS A PROPHECY TO THE EFFECT THAT, AFTER A CERTAIN NUMBER OF YEARS, THE COMMANDER WILL RISE FROM THE DEAD AND LEAD THEM OUT OF THIS HOUSE TO THE RECONQUEST OF THE COLONY, BELIEVE AND WAIT!' When he had finished reading, the explorer rose and saw the men standing about him and smiling as if they had read the inscription with him, had found it ridiculous and were calling upon him to join in their viewpoint. The explorer acted as though he had noticed nothing, distributed a few coins among them, waited until the table had been shoved back over the grave, then left the tea-house and walked towards the port.

The guard and the condemned man had come across acquaintances in the tea-house who detained them. But they must have torn themselves away soon after, for the explorer was no further than the middle of the long stairway leading to the boats, when they came running after him. They probably wanted to force the explorer at the last moment to take them along. While the explorer was negotiating with a sailor down below for his crossing to the liner, the two men rushed down the steps, silently, for they did not dare cry out. But when they arrived below, the explorer was already in the boat and the sailor was just about to shove off. They might still have been able to jump into the boat, but the explorer picked up a heavy, knotted tow-rope from the floor, threatened them with it, and thus prevented them from jumping.

*(Translated by Eugene Jolas)*

## "NEURO"

# NOTES ON WAR GUILT

GUILT, boredom and pathological anxiety about the future compete with one another for pride of place as the dominant neurosis of the age. (Frustration can mostly be divided out among these three, while the victims of persecution-mania, though perhaps the most acute of all sufferers, are relatively few.) It is difficult to say whether the joint burden of boredom and anxiety has been increased by the war for English intellectuals, with whom alone we are here concerned.

Boredom has generally increased, while pathological anxiety, with the vast multiplication of real perils, has generally decreased. On the other hand, boredom, carried past a certain pitch of intensity, breeds a special kind of anxiety regarding the victim's capacity to stand up indefinitely to the continued strain of boredom in the future. This kind of anxiety more than any other diverts intellectuals into forms of national work outside the fighting services.

The quantitative position of Guilt is still harder to assess. As is well known, Guilt diminished remarkably during the Blitz, but London, if its present aerial immunity continues, bids fair to surpass pre-war guilt records by the end of the current year. Guilt springs from a sharp sense of the gap between one's ideal self (or super-ego or whatever fashionable term is preferred) and one's actual self as one 'appreciates' it, which, of course, may be very different from one's actual self as it is.

It has always been disputed exactly what kind or degree of 'Guilt' or 'sense of sin' is beneficial. Completely devoid of it, we are not perhaps absolutely incapable of improving ourselves but extremely unlikely to accomplish much in that direction, except in so far as heredity and environment have been kind enough to place us on an upward moving staircase.

Oppressively saddled, however, with this same 'Guilt', we become hopelessly self-absorbed to the point, if not of madness, at least of physical and nervous ill-health and ineffectiveness. A train of cumulative guilt is then set in motion by our sense of our



ability to maintain normal standards of regular effort and output.

Guilt is partly explicable in terms of fantasies. Their rapacious wranny in the emotional world is not the product of intellectual judgments and can only with infinite labour be brought under intellectual control. 'I feel a worm,' said a hero of the last war, now a business man of fifty, 'whenever I think of Libya'. He is still maintaining the fantasy of himself as a front-line soldier. It is hard to decide at what date he should have abandoned it. In different forms, and long after the physical basis for it had disappeared, it has motivated a life of remarkable unselfishness and constructive usefulness.

We love the idea of ourselves as virile or physically brave or as prepared for the supreme sacrifice when called upon. We have, in fact, cherished this idea of ourselves for years. In war, for most of us, emotionally not intellectually, this idea becomes inextricably linked to the soldier-concept. Result, we hate our war jobs in Food Control or the Ministry of Information.

We hound ourselves into the Army; we try to take pride in our adjustment into good soldiers; we narrow our focus to a concentration on the immediate and local; we clean or inspect rifles and equipment until it costs us an effort to make sense of an article in the *Daily Telegraph*. And still we cling deep down to the ideal of our individual independence, our intellectual integrity, our spiritual initiative.

The fantasy of a surrender so complete that all personality is abandoned for the sake of becoming a cog in the war-winning machine—that is the fantasy to which our conduct officially inculcates us. But another deeper-rooted fantasy refuses to exercise itself automatically merely because our plans have changed—the fantasy of ourselves as splendid individuals—Cicero or Disraeli or St. Paul. Between these rival fantasies there can be no peace. And between them they allow us none.

We manœuvre back to an M.I. job or the War Office—only to find that this gives us the worst of both worlds. The struggle of adjustment in the fantasy sphere is bound to be painful. But it cannot be avoided. We have got to go through with it.

Propaganda has a big part to play here but an exceptionally delicate one. From the standpoint of the nation as a whole, it is a sound psychological strategy to build up hero-fantasies round

pilots, seamen, commando leaders, etc., and much good sense has been extending the front-line category to include factory-workers and even at certain moments the Home Guard.

Something much more ingenious, however, is needed to give intellectuals that self-confidence in their rôles without which they rapidly become the most ineffective of all social groups and quite incapable of rendering their unique contribution to the 'national effort', in the war-winning and other senses. What is needed is the creation of the right kind of fantasy to stimulate their self-expression (without the everlasting clogs and distractions of guilt) in whatever form of patriotic endeavour they are given their place.

The proper fantasy-rôle for them is inevitably different from that required to induce the mass-heroism and endurance of the multitude. Those who frame it need not primarily concern themselves with making allowance for any physical frailty supposed to be characteristic of intellectuals. This may or may not be present as an additional complication. The main concern must be with the intellectual's need for making an individual, even an eccentric contribution—a need not felt to anything like the same extent by the average man, who is frequently turned into a valuable cog, a hero and a true individual by one and the same process of discipline.

The question we are discussing must not be confused with the question how Government policy (the National Service Acts, etc.) should best permit or provide opportunities for intellectuals to express themselves either in governmental work or art. That problem has so far been handled in not unenlightened fashion by the authorities, though the number of possible improvements is legion. Taking policy as it is, what we are discussing is how to bring propaganda into line with it.

But the propaganda which will give intellectuals sufficient peace of mind to do their war jobs effectively cannot in the nature of things be supplied by the B.B.C., Miniform, the cinemas or other aids to mass-feeling. It can only come from the propaganda of the intellectuals themselves, either in their private capacities or *par excellence* through such a paper as *Horizon*. Collective efforts of this special limited kind are indispensable for bringing about those shifts and adjustments in the fantasy-world, which are particularly necessary since the war, but particularly

difficult, seeing that the general stream of propaganda is all the other way and not unreasonably exalts at every turn those fantasies that best serve and stimulate the ordinary man.

Let it not be said the intellectuals are or should be 'above' propaganda, 'above' inflicting it, and 'above' responding to it. It is of the essence of propaganda, as distinct from balanced argumentation, to build up, through an appeal to the emotions, that current atmosphere or climate of opinion and feeling which determines what kind of ambition-fantasies shall please or stimulate us. In the present case we have already reached correct intellectual decisions as to the part we should play in the war, or are capable of reaching them if not inhibited by emotional disturbance. Where the intellect already is, there must the emotions be induced to make their way. Sympathetic propaganda by intellectuals for intellectuals can expedite a process bound to be long and painful for all of us and maybe beyond the strength of many.

Somehow or other our emotions must be induced to recognize what our intellects already recognize that, for example, those youngish men who served Lloyd George with such distinction during the last war in Downing Street took what was for them subjectively the nobler part, and objectively accomplished at least as much for the country as any like number of their contemporaries in the front line. Widespread romanticisation of them and their successors of to-day is neither possible nor desirable, but they must be built up somewhere. And where else but in the pages of *Horizon*?

Palpable defects in the present war effort spring from the complete suppression up to the present of the 'thirties' age group. This is the more surprising and disastrous seeing that the previous generation now in their forties is usually described as 'missing'. If anyone in his thirties is asked to name the ten ablest of his contemporaries, it is a safe wager that nine out of ten, whether inside or outside the services, will be doing something of national significance today than two-and-a-half years ago before the war. The main cause of this impotence is the lurking shadow of the front-line complex which prevails both among them and in the public mind concerning them, and which prevents them throwing more than a limited portion of their energies and ambitions behind the tasks allotted them in the war.

*Horizon* has achieved a unique position as a kind of highest



common factor of contemporary sophistication. What can it do to relieve the damaging neurosis touched upon in this article. First it can regularly drive home in its editorial columns the same kind of lesson as has been outlined here—the lesson that the duty of a man with brains is substantially unaffected by war. It is now as always to try to find an outlet for his powers either in the interests of humanity or if he be a professional artist in the direction of creative achievement. Now as always it is his duty to pay no attention to danger or physical discomfort one way or the other—that is to say, either as an attraction or a deterrent.

Secondly in selecting contributions *Horizon* must insist in future on a higher degree of correspondence between what is printed and what we really think regarding the various lives we are at present leading. The lives of intellectuals must be described in terms of the contemporary values which we are striving to formulate. The Ministry of Information, it is true, is ridiculous in the eyes of the *Daily Mirror* public. So are Administrative Officers in the Air Force, 'unbewinged and unbemedalled'. So are able technicians who have gained rapid promotion in the Ordnance Corps. So indeed are we all under one aspect or another unless we happen to spend our entire lives in the Air or in Tobruk. But most of us know that while we were always somewhat ridiculous we are no more ridiculous than we were before the war. Contemporary literature should give expression to the peculiar difficulties with which intellectuals are struggling in the present war and the singular honesty with which for the most part they are facing them.



Poet in Landscape. Pen and Wash drawing (1911) by JOHN CRAXTON





# ARTURO BAREA

## NOTES ON

### FEDERICO GARCIA LORCA

#### I.—THE POET AND THE PEOPLE

THOSE of us who were born in Spain during the eighteentheties found ourselves thrown into a society in a state of permanent crisis. As children we came to feel the impact of all the shocks which racked our parents and their friends, many of whom defeat and poverty had made bitter and peevish. We grew up in a State battling against misery and inferiority just when other European nations seemed on the road to permanent prosperity and security.

By 1898 Spain had lost everything; she had lost her short-lived hope of a Republic which might have incorporated her in the democratic movement of Europe, and later she had lost the remnants of her Empire in the pitiful Cuban War. That crippled Spain lived on usurious foreign loans for which she paid by handing over her copper and iron, pawning her railways and selling her water power to foreign owners. Spain was without an industry when the big modern industries were growing in Europe and America. Her fertile but mismanaged lands were exhausted; the country was short of bread. But she was plagued by earthquakes, epidemics and floods which seemed to herald the Apocalypse in the eyes of the bewildered masses. The monarchy, ruled by blustering generals and flashy politicians, had become a germ-infested morgue.

The best writers and poets of that period strove to give shape to their haunting experience of defeat, to explain it and to overcome it. Valle-Inclán, Galdos, Unamuno, Azorin became the leaders of the movement of intellectual and social self-criticism which we call the Movement of '98. It has left deep traces in the spiritual life of Spain, which nothing has yet obliterated and hardly anything overlaid. They established contact with the world outside Spain, only to return to the problem which obsessed them, the problem of their country's inner life.

When the generation born in the years of defeat had grown up, bitterness and unrest had deepened; the foundations of existence had shrunk further; the desperate criticism of the older rebels could not fill the void. There was a long period reaching from the last World War to the late 'twenties, when the young people of this generation—my generation—tried hard to live their own life, bright against a dark background, without wrestling with the problem of Spain as those others had done.

The lonely poet Antonio Machado, who belonged to neither generation and to both, believed in our revolutionary mission. He thought that our generation would win for Spain that clean new life of which he only dreamed. In 1914, when Federico Garcia Lorca was a boy on the verge of adolescence, he wrote the poem called 'A Young Spain'. (This is a prose translation which preserves the words and their meaning, but scarcely more than a reminiscence of their harsh and powerful rhythm.)

It was a time of lies, of infamy. They put our Spain,  
That sorely wounded Spain, in carnival dress,  
And then they made her poor, squalid and drunken,  
So that no hand should touch the open wound.

It was yesterday; we were still adolescent;  
In evil hour, pregnant with sombre presages,  
We wished to ride unbridled a chimera,  
While the sea slept, cloyed and tired with shipwrecks.

We left the sordid galley in the harbour  
And chose to navigate a golden vessel  
On the high open seas. We sought no shore  
But cast away our sails, our anchor and our rudder.

Even then, the dark ground of our dreams—the heirloom  
Of a century that passed, beaten and inglorious—  
Was shot with dawn; light of divine ideas  
Was ever battling with our turbulence.

Yet each one followed the set course of his madness,  
Waving his arms, advertising his prowess,  
Wearing his armour burnished like a mirror,  
Each said: 'Today is evil, tomorrow—mine.'

Today is that yesterday's tomorrow. But this Spain  
 Is still decked out in Carnival's dirty tinsel,  
 Still poor and squalid and drunken, as she was,  
 Yet now with evil wine: blood from her wound.

You, younger youth, if from the heights above  
 The spirit comes to you, will seek your own adventure,  
 Awake and limpid in the divine fire,  
 Clear like the diamond, like the diamond pure.

The poet of that 'younger youth' was to be Federico Garcia Lorca, in whose poetry the word Spain never occurs, who fought no social nor political fight, but who was so sensitive a recipient and transmitter of Spanish emotions that his work assumed a life of its own after he had been killed by unknown fascists, at the beginning of the Civil War in which he had no conscious part. There is no direct political meaning in Lorca's work; he emphasized often enough, and rightly, that he had no politics. Whenever his writings carry a social message it is, at least on the surface, a conservative one. The masses and what moved them, such did not interest him. And yet he belonged to the Spanish democratic movement for deeper reasons than that he happened to grow up to fame within and through the progressive intelligentsia of his country.

A great part of his work is 'popular' in the sense that it touched his people as with the full charge of their own half-conscious feelings, intensified and transformed through his art. The emotional forces he released became part of the shapeless revolutionary movements of Spain whether he intended or not. Thus it was, I think, inevitable that he was killed by obscure fascist brutality and that his work became a banner to the Spanish masses.

It is of this Lorca that I want to speak first. All Spanish intellectuals who have written about him can say: 'The Federico with whom I lived in the *Residencia de Estudiantes* . . . my friend Federico . . . . ' I myself never knew Federico Garcia Lorca, though he was of my generation. I did not belong to this set. But I belonged to his public, the people, and it is the people's Lorca whom I know.

When the Civil War broke out in July, 1936, and Lorca was



shot in Granada, *Milicianos* who could neither read nor write learnt his romances by heart, and the tunes and rhymes of his simple little songs became war songs of the 'Reds'.

I had a friend, almost illiterate, 46 years old, in the Republican Militia from the first days, who sometimes came to see me in Madrid when on leave from his post in Carabanchel, four miles away. He would produce a tattered copy of Lorca's *Romances Gitano*, filthy with the grease of the trenches, and say:

'Explain this to me. I can feel what it means and I know it by heart, but I can't explain it.' And he would recite the opening lines of the 'Romance of the Spanish Civil Guard':

The horses are black,  
 Black are the horseshoes.  
 On their capes glint  
 Stains of ink and of wax.  
 Their skulls are of lead,  
 Therefore they have no tears.  
 With souls of varnished leather  
 They come down the road,  
 Hunchbacked, nocturnal.  
 Where they go they command  
 Silence of dark rubber  
 And fear of fine sand.  
 They pass if they wish to pass  
 And they hide in their heads  
 A vague astronomy  
 Of shapeless pistols.

I would try to tell him:

This is Spain—an enormous barracks of the Civil Guard. They are black, they, their horses, the horseshoes of their horses. Black means mourning. Everything in Spain is black. The Civil Guard are the keepers of this black soul of Spain. Their capes get stained with ink, the ink that runs out of the horn inkwell they use for filling in official reports which inundate Spain and stock her prisons. Their capes are stained with wax. Wax has dropped off them from all the candles in all the processions in which the Civil Guard went along to protect the precious jewels of famous saints. They are killers. It is their profession to raise their rifles and to kill Spaniards. The Civil Guard have never killed any but

Spaniards. Therefore their brains, their minds, are full of the idea of killing with their rifles: their skulls are choked with lead. How could they shed tears at the death of a Spaniard whom they have killed with a bullet cast in the lead which fills their minds by day and night? Their souls are black, hard and glossy like leather covered with brilliant varnish. Two by two they ride along the roads and over the hills, their brains clogged with lead, their backs hunched with the load of their knapsacks. In those knapsacks they carry their horn inkwell so that they can write a report on the dead, and a candle-end so they can write it in the light of the moon and scan the face of the man they have just killed. For they ride by night. They hide in the darkness of the night and wait in silence. They aim at a man's shape in the moonlight, and fire. Therefore, people walk on tiptoe wherever the Civil Guard is; they fall silent and walk as though on rubber tyres. And their teeth grate as when you walk on sand-strewn tiles.

'You know,' my friend would say to me, 'while I was still a boy, I worked in Carabanchel. In the winter, my brother and I walked back at night when the road was almost empty. Sometimes we heard the horses of the pair of Civil Guards, and then we threw ourselves down in the ditch until they had passed and we could no longer hear them, and then we ran home, half dead with fright, and told our father we had met the Civil Guard . . . .

'But what I don't understand is why, after these verses when you would expect this man to speak of the Civil Guard and the people, of the poor landworkers whom the Civil Guard have beaten and the workers whom they have shot, he suddenly starts saying: "Oh, City of the Gypsies!" and tells you a story about Jerez in a night of *fiesta*, when the Civil Guard make a raid. Haven't the Civil Guard beaten up others besides gypsies?'

I answered: 'But don't you recognize yourself and all Spaniards those gypsies whom the Civil Guard assault and torture?'

For this, I think, was the reason why this poem has made such deep and lasting impression on the Spanish masses. Superficially, the *Romance de la Guardia Civil Española* describes nothing but a brutal clash between a group of Civil Guards and the gypsies celebrating their joyous Christmas Night Festival in the streets of Jerez de la Frontera—'Oh, City of the Gypsies!' The common Spaniard, in his hatred and fear of the black horsemen who always hunted in pairs, would feel surprised and

almost hurt that the poet, after his first verses with their load of sombre associations, turned away to the gypsy world. But after this jolt, he—the ‘common reader’—would suddenly identify himself with those childlike, dreamlike gypsies at play, assaulted by the naked brutality of the State. The verses would make him feel the clash in his own body, even though he might consider the gypsies as a useless, inferior and good-for-nothing breed. And the unpolitical ballad with its novel use of old words and traditional rhythm would stir up rebellious emotions.

During the first half of the Spanish War the ordinary men and women who lived and fought in Madrid were driven by a multitude of emotions like these, far more than by reasons of the head. Most of them felt no urge to hear about their miseries and sufferings, their wrongs and rights, but they delighted in discovering themselves, in exploring their feelings, faculties and tastes. This made the trenches and factories of Madrid so rich in individual creative acts, so rich in absurd or heroic initiative. This made Lorca so beloved, for his verses had the power to make people feel and see familiar things in a new, clear light.

My friend from Carabanchel once brought a soldier of his company to see me. This soldier was a young man from Jaen who had escaped the Fascists through the endless olive groves, marching through half Spain until he reached Madrid and was given a rifle. He was a landworker, half Andalusian, half gypsy; his sallow skin shone with a golden glow.

‘I’ve brought him along so that you can read him something by Lorca. He can’t read himself.’

The olive fields of Jaen—I read:

*El campo  
de olivos  
se abre y se cierra  
como un abanico . . .*

The olive field  
opens and shuts  
like a fan . . .

*Los olivos  
están cargados  
de gritos . . .*



The olive trees  
are laden  
with cries . . .

'That's right. Look: if you stand in the middle of an olive field between two trees, you look along a straight lane, like a fan that's shut. If you go behind a tree, all the lanes between the rows open up like a fan. And if you walk between the trees there's a big fan opening and shutting before you. And the olive fields are full of cries and calls. The thrushes come in flocks and eat the olives and make a great noise. . . . Go on.'

This boy had gone hungry, working in the olive fields. He had fought for life or death between his olive trees. But they were his trees, and Lorca's verses moved him in his sheer physical love for the trees which had been his life. Perhaps he would have been less shaken and exalted by a description of the social tragedy of the olive fields, of which there is no trace in Lorca, than by the vision of the big silver-green fan. I know he went back to his trench convinced that Lorca was 'his' poet, and therefore a revolutionary poet. Yet this poem of the olive trees was written by Lorca when he was still almost a boy, in 1921, when he worked together with Manuel de Falla, the composer, and Zuloaga, the painter, to revive the traditional Andalusian folk-lore in the *Fiesta del Canto Jondo*.

It was not, as might be argued, Lorca's assassination in Granada which made him so widely and profoundly popular in republican Spain. The same process which I tried to describe—his touching and awakening of emotions which are individual yet so simple, ancient and common to all Spaniards that they assume the quality of mass emotions and provoke an awakening of the mind—turned a minor play of Lorca's into Republican propaganda at a much earlier stage.

Lorca's historical play *Mariana Pineda* had its first public performance in 1927. The military dictatorship was then nearing its end; the Throne was shaken; the public demanded more and more loudly a government account of the Moroccan disaster, until then adroitly glossed over. The movement for a democratic republic and against the dictatorial monarchy was gaining strength with every day. Censorship and repression were at work, with close control and with secret brutality in the police prisons and the barracks of the Civil Guard. The masses of the people

searched for means of expression, and the simplest words were given a double meaning. At that time the famous cartoonist Bagaria, prevented from publishing cartoons, published instead designs for needlework, whose esoteric meaning the public learnt to decipher like the secrets of crossword puzzles.

In this atmosphere, *Mariana Pineda* was staged. The performances of what Lorca called a 'popular ballad' were turned into public demonstrations. And yet, coldly analysed, this lyrical play has a reactionary rather than a revolutionary bias.

Its historical heroine was a woman of Granada who embroidered a Republican flag in preparation for the liberal insurrection against the reign of Ferdinand VII, in the thirties of the nineteenth century. The police learnt of the plot, the conspirators fled abroad, and the only evidence found was the flag embroidered by Mariana Pineda. She was arrested, and hanged because she refused to betray the names of her associates.

In Spanish history, Mariana figures as an active Republican; to Catholic and Monarchist Spain and its offspring, Fascist Spain, she is a dangerous revolutionary; to the Democrats a political heroine. To Lorca she is neither. This is his interpretation:

Mariana Pineda is blindly in love with Don Pedro de Sotomayor, a liberal conspirator whose political passion constantly clashes with her love. Because she loves him, she who pays no attention to politics but is a marvellous needlewoman, embroiders a flag for his party—for him. When the conspiracy is discovered and she, the innocent one, arrested, Mariana expects that he will come back as he has promised, to set her free or 'to die with her', and therefore refuses to betray any name. She mounts the scaffold, deeply hurt by her lover's desertion and rising above her own disillusionment in a last effort to reach him:

'I embroidered the flag for him. I conspired  
To live and to love his very thought.  
I loved him more than myself and my children.  
Do you love Freedom more than your Marianita?  
'Then I will be that Freedom you adore.'

That is to say: the heroine of political history becomes a woman in love, without any political ideas, a blindly enamoured woman very much in the Spanish tradition, who sacrifices herself for 'her man'. The revolutionaries become derisory

towards who abandon a woman and allow her to go to the gallows without even attempting a heroic gesture of rescue. Throughout the whole play there is no expression of popular feeling, nothing but general cowardice in the face of the execution.

‘. . . You forget  
That ere I die all Granada must die.  
That very noble gentlemen will come  
To save me. For I’m noble, I’m the daughter  
Of a ship’s captain who himself was Knight  
Of Calatrava. Leave me now in peace. . . .

No one in Granada will show himself  
When you pass by with your last company.  
The Andalusians talk, but afterwards . . .

A play which thus deviated from the idea of popular heroism and made the Republicans look ridiculous might easily have met with failure in the Madrid of 1927; or it might have been taken up by the Right and used for its purposes. But it came to be a play against the Right and for human rights. The great Spanish public which would have rejected the idea of a woman sacrificing herself for political ideals (even for popular ones) easily understood the woman who sacrificed her life for the sake of love—and easily converted her into a political symbol. To quote Stephen Spender, though out of context: ‘Poetry which is not written in order to advance any particular set of political opinions may yet be profoundly political.’

Señora Pilar, the concierge of Number 9, would be given a ticket to the play. She would look forward to hearing the story of ‘that wicked woman who was hanged because she got entangled in politics’, and tell everybody: ‘Yes, sir, well hanged he was. Who told her to go and get all mixed up with those revolutionaries? Women belong to their home anyway.’

But then in the theatre, when the soft music of the verses had reached her, she would begin to weep: ‘Poor darling, they’re going to hang her for that young scamp who deceived her. And he a grand gentleman. If it had been my Nicolas now, he’s a Republican of the good old sort. Well yes, he’s a bit simple. But if he knew they were going to hang me because I had embroidered a flag for him, he’d knock the judge’s teeth in soon



enough.' And she would rise from her seat and shout '*Viva la Republica!*'

Scenes of this kind occurred almost daily in the Teatro Español. Through a drama with an anti-political argument and therefore a reactionary moral, Lorca had stirred popular sentimentality and sentiment, and set them in motion in a very different direction.

## II. THE POET AND SEX

FEDERICO GARCIA LORCA, who could never face up to politics, yet faced up to the problems of sex. Now, sexual life has its definite characteristics, traditions and ritual in every nation, even though the sexual problems are universal and a-national. In every nation there is a minority which shares its rules of behaviour with similar minorities in all other nations within the same sphere of civilization, and there is the great mass of people with their peculiar unwritten but inviolable sexual laws, their national sexual code. Lorca felt and expressed the problems of sex such as they had been shaped and transformed by the complex conventions of his people. He felt the emotions at the root of the Spanish sexual code so deeply that in his art he magnified them until traditional values came alive with a disquieting significance.

His two 'rural tragedies', *Bodas de Sangre* and *Yerma*, show these traditions and the problems behind them most forcefully.

*Bodas de Sangre*—'Blood Wedding'—has a simple pattern of love, honour and vengeance. The only son of a widow whose husband and first-born son have been killed by the men of a neighbouring family, is in love with the daughter of a widower, a rich farmer like himself. A marriage is arranged in which the Father's greed for more land and the Mother's wish to bury the memory of bloodshed and to see new life created have as much part as the Son's love. The girl, however, has long been in love with the son of the man who killed the father and brother of her betrothed. None of the young men want to carry on the feud which is ever-present in the Mother's mind. The girl has been fighting against her own passion for years and wants to keep the contract with the Son. The other man has even married to escape from himself and the girl's attraction. But both he and the girl cannot bear that she should deliver herself up to another; they

hope on the wedding day. There is only one thing to be done. 'The hour of blood has struck again.' The Mother knows that she has lost her hope of grandchildren and will lose her only remaining son, but she sends him in pursuit of the couple, because the murderer of this hope must be killed—the blood of the son of her husband's murderer must be shed. The two men meet, fight and kill each other.

The outline of this triangle and vendetta story is familiar. But Lorca has filled it with an essentially, exclusively Spanish tragedy. The Mother is the quintessence of this tragedy. A strong woman who had enjoyed life with her husband, she has become dominated by the fear of the extinction of her blood—fear of death not of herself but of her seed—and by the anxiety to see her physical existence continued, perpetuated by her son's children. This constant fear fills her with a sense of doom. Vengeance of her 'blood' follows from her possessive, death-haunted love; to let the enemy's seed survive one's own would mean final death.

Centuries of Moorish and mediæval-Catholic breeding, centuries of a society which valued women only for their sons produced this attitude, and the code which sprang from it is still real in Spain. Lorca's Mother, who likes men to be lusty and wild because it means more children—more sons—is deeply convinced that procreation and fecundity are the object, not the consequence of married sexual love. Her son must marry to give her, the Mother, grandchildren.

. . . and see that you make me happy by giving me six grandchildren, or as many as you like, since your father has not had the time to make me more sons.

She glories in man's procreative strength. 'Your grandfather left son at every corner,' she says proudly to her son.

Mother and Son walk over the land of his betrothed.

Son: These are the dry lands.

Mother: Your father would have covered them with trees.

Son: Even without water?

Mother: He would have found it. In the three years he lived with me he planted ten cherry trees, the three walnut trees by the mill, a whole vineyard and the plant called Jupiter which withered. This moral conviction that men and women must be fecund and that the man, the husband, is the master because he is the instrument of procreation has very ancient roots. It is a simple fact

which keeps it alive in peasant countries: there must be sons to work the land and to defend the property. In Spain this law was strengthened by the rules of the Moorish harem, which influenced the non-Moorish society of the country and survived the driving-out of the Moors. It was exalted and adapted by the stern teachings of the Spanish Church, which made it sinful for husband and wife to enjoy each other, but righteous to multiply. The code of honour which demands the taking of life and the preservation of virginity, not for the sake of love but for the sake of the 'blood', is part of this tradition; it provides the sanctions against sexual offences and protects the property of the family.

The curious thing is that this code is still alive in Spaniards, including those who have rationally repudiated it. Even in the towns, men and women may look on, unmoved, at the display of an exaggerated aristocratic 'point of honour' in some of the plays of Calderon and Lope de Vega, but they are stirred by the sterner, simpler justice of the 'Alcalde of Zalamea', and they are moved in the recesses of their consciousness by the ancient popular emotions crystallized in Lorca's images.

In fact, blood feud and its code of honour are things of this age, not merely of the past, to Spaniards. The modern laws have prosecuted vendettas, but they were powerless against family feuds which lasted through generations and destroyed generations. The same fierce possessive love and haunting fear of extinction which drive the Mother in Lorca's play have driven many women during the Spanish War and, through children steeped in hatred against the murderers of 'their blood', will breed relentless feuds for generations to come.

On this hard soil, the code of the blood is stronger than love. The Mother in *Bodas de Sangre* admits no justification for the betrayal of the law of purity. A woman must not have a lover. Contemptuously she says of the girl who followed her beloved: 'Honest women, clean women, go into the water. But not she.' This rule is accepted by the girl herself. She knows that she did wrong in following the other man and wanting to live with him. She accepts the law that the honour of the family and her own honour are safe only if her virginity is left intact for her husband to convert it into maternity.

When the two dead bodies have been carried back to the village, the faithless bride goes to the house of her dead



bridegroom's mother and meets her curses. Then she justifies her time, not by her love, but by the other man's fatal erotic attraction. And she defends fiercely her 'intact' honour, ready to face an ordeal by fire.

For I went away with the other one. I went. You would have done the same. I was a seared woman, covered with sores within and without, and your son was a trickle of water, I hoped to get children, land, health from him. But the other was a dark leaf-grown river, he overcame me with the sound of reeds, singing through his teeth. . . . But what you say—no. I am clean as a new-born girl child, and I am strong enough to prove it to you. Light the fire. We will put our hands in the flame. You for your son, I for my body. And you will be the first to drop your hands. . . .

*Bodas de Sangre* ends with a lament in which the Mother, the girl and the women of the village bespeak death in tender, insidious words:

Beautiful horseman,  
now a heap of snow:  
he stormed hills and fairs  
and women's arms.  
Now the moss of night  
crowns his brow. . . .

Sunflower of your mother,  
Mirror of the earth. . . .

Neighbours: with a knife,  
with a little knife,  
on a marked day, between two and three,  
two men killed each other for love.  
With a knife,  
with a little knife,  
that hardly fills the hand,  
but it pierces finely  
the frightened flesh,  
and it stops in the place  
where bewildered trembles  
the dark root of the cry.

Thus, in reshaping the old, familiar, half-forgotten tale Lorca made visible not the behaviour of people possessed by their blood code, but 'the dark root of the cry' in a ritual in which sex is possession of life and salvation from death, and to which we all respond.

But *Bodas de Sangre* has been translated into French and English and staged in Paris, London and New York. I was in Paris in 1938 when it failed, in spite of an excellent translation, I seem to remember by Jean Cassou, and in spite of the praise from Left-wing critics who mixed admiration for fighting Republican Spain with a mystical—and snobbish—admiration for the 'blood and soil' qualities and the lyrical symbolism of the play. It had to fail, because foreign spectators only understood it through a laboured intellectual process, not through the swift, piercing associations and sensations it produced in a Spanish public. Indeed in any Spanish-speaking public—for in Hispano-America it was as great and lasting a success as in Spain itself. In his introduction to Stephen Spender's and J. L. Gili's prose translations of selected poems by Lorca, Rafael Nadal speaks of the failure of the play in New York and then says: 'Whether we like it or not, Spain is from many points of view a world apart, and an attempt to transfer, in Lorca's most Spanish poetry, Spanish values of men and things meets with an almost unsurmountable barrier'.

I am even more conscious of this barrier in speaking of Lorca's other rural tragedy, *Yerma*.

The very title is untranslatable. *Yerma* is an adjective which means uncultivated, unsown, untilled, waste, as in *tierras yermas*. Here it means a woman who is sterile, barren, not through a physical defect of hers but because she has never been made fecund—because she was denied the seed. *La Yerma* of the play is utterly convinced that motherhood is withheld from her because her husband, by no means physiologically impotent and living in a so-called normal relationship with her, does not 'put his will to having children' but simply wants to enjoy her body.

*La Yerma* married only to have children from her man. She never felt, and never wanted to feel, any pleasure in the sexual act.

'The first day I was betrothed to him, I thought of the children and looked at myself in the mirror of his eyes.'

'But we must enjoy our men, my girl.'

'I gave myself to my husband for the sake of the child, and I

go on giving myself to him so that the child should come, but never for pleasure.'

Because the child never came though she knows her body to be ready and fit for it, she feels her motherhood defeated and wounded. Externally obedient, according to her rigid laws, she is filled with an obscure hatred against the husband who takes his pleasure, but in doing so refuses her that spiritual co-operation in creating a child which she feels to be essential. All her mystic tenderness turns inwards, to the dream-child. There is another man who stirs her senses and who, so she believes, would give her the child. But her code forbids her to seek this solution, or to leave her husband and live with the other. She guards her husband's and her own 'honour' even while her brain becomes diseased with despairing, physical sexual hunger for the child.

Oh what a meadow of anguish!

Oh what a door closed to loveliness!

I want to bear the pain of a child, and the air  
offers me dahlias of the sleeping moon.

These two springs in me, springs  
of warm milk, in the thicket of my flesh  
they are twin pulses of a horse,  
which shake the branch of my pain. . . .

But you must come, love, my child,  
for the water bears salt, the earth fruit,  
and our bellies guard soft little children  
as the clouds carry gentle rain.

'I am hurt, utterly hurt and humbled, when I see the young shoots of the wheat, and that springs never cease giving water, and that the sheep bear hundreds of lambs, and bitches, and it is as though the fields rose to show me their young broods, lumbering, while I feel two hammers beating me here (she beats against her breasts) instead of the mouth of my child.'

While *La Yerma* converts herself into a possessed priestess of eternity, her quarrels with her husband become more bitter every day. They are devoid of any tenderness and loving-kindness. He has no understanding for her needs, as little as the experienced old woman whom *La Yerma* meets after running away from her barren home on a desperate pilgrimage, and who gives her coarse but practical advice. Neither witchery nor



religious fervour nor the way of the world can free her from her frustration.

In a last meeting with her husband Juan, she cries out from the depth of her unloved, unwanted motherhood:

*Yerma.* What was it you sought in me?

*Juan.* You.

*Yerma.* Oh, yes, you sought a home, tranquillity, a woman. But nothing more. Is it true what I'm saying?

*Juan.* It is true. Like all the others.

*Yerma.* But the other things? And your son?

Fully realizing the hopelessness of her quest, afraid of the 'dishonour' she might bring over her husband, she finally kills him with her own hands, choking the life out of him. By his dead body she tells the gathered crowd:

Withered, withered. But safe. Now I know it for certain.

Alone. I shall rest without waking with a sudden start to see whether my blood tells me of the coming of another, of a new blood. My body dried up for ever. What do you want to know? Don't come near me, for I have killed my child. I myself. I have killed my child.

I imagine that this tragedy strikes foreigners—non-Spaniards—as the lyrical exaltation of a clinical case, moving only in its poetic force, but strange and unreal. To a Spanish public it is a soul-shaking experience.

Here is a cry from the tortured soul of a Spanish woman encased in the implacable armour of rigid laws, half-Christian and half-pagan. In the reality of Spanish life, these laws—'you shall bear children in pain' and 'you must obey your husband who is your master'—are mitigated by compromise and undermined by the slow evolution of a new moral code. *La Yerma* cannot achieve a compromise. In her, one law—women must marry, not for love, but to bear children—has cast out all others, so that her eroticism is bound up with her dream-child, and the concrete relationship with her husband becomes the barest sexual intercourse for the sake of conception. But it is Lorca's supreme art that through this exceptional case, not meant to be realistically sound, the Spanish public conceives the full meaning of a code which otherwise is no longer obtrusive enough to be sensed in the innumerable small frustrations and spiritual distortions of sexual life. To this public, *La Yerma's* acts are inevitable and right within her code. But the

nakedness of her emotions and the crude, clear discussions of the sexual act, sperms and spirit, not only bares but also attacks the very roots of this code.

Nothing can be more traditional and in a Catholic sense conventional than the moral of *Yerma*. The poet accepts these Spanish values of men and things'. But he shows them applied with such an uncompromising completeness that he cannot but produce a rebellion; a rebellion against the spiritual mould of Spanish women, primarily, for *Bodas de Sangre* as well as *Yerma* place the conflict in the soul of women and see the problems of sex from the woman's side rather than from the man's.

This exceptional sensitiveness to feminine reactions runs through the whole of Lorca's poetry wherever it touches themes of 'love', even when the man appears the actor and conqueror. But against this background Lorca sets out all the main elements which enter into the structure of Spanish sexual consciousness.

Spanish children first learn about the supreme value of chastity to men and virginity in women through the stories of saints and martyrs, on which religious tuition rests during the early years of childhood. Except for St. Anna, the mother of the Virgin—the 'Immaculate Conception'—most of the female saints who loom large in Spanish hagiology and martyrology are virgins. In their religious tuition and in their studies of classical literature, Spanish boys are forced to visualize the female body as a 'sack of uncleanness', and to imagine putrefaction throughout its slow, loathsome stages. Simultaneously, they are shown the virginal martyrs with the clean loveliness of their young flesh and in the horror of their mutilated bodies. Perversely, a deeper exaltation and a deeper compassion are produced when the breasts hacked off by the executioner are described as young and virginal, than when they are the good tired breasts of a mother grown old. Young children are taught to long for a martyr's death which, in the midst of unbearable pain, contains the searing joy of union with the Saviour, the beatitude of transition to a better life. This educational process feeds particularly into the girls the ideals and ideas of Lust through Pain, Holiness through Horror, and Virginity triumphant over Violence and crowned by the Heavenly Bridegroom. Juvenile auto-masochism is cultivated by those unimpeachable legends

and developed by the terrifying realistic pictures of martyred saints in Spanish churches where the air is drenched with sensuous exaltation, cruel and cloying.

This very air pervades Lorca's ballad of the 'Martyrdom of St. Eulalia':

The Consul demands a platter  
for the breasts of Eulalia.  
A bundle of green veins  
burgeons from her throat . . .

Through the red holes  
where her breasts had been  
they saw little heavens  
and rivulets of white milk. . . .

There is another side to religious eroticism as it is alive in Spain—the sugary prettiness with which pious women clothe their favourite male saints and the angels, who are androgynous, but not sexless, in their imagination. In the *Romancero Gitano* there is the poem of St. Michael, the archangel-patron of Granada:

In the alcove of his tower,  
St. Michael covered with lace  
shows his beautiful thighs  
in bell-shaped ruffles. . . .

St. Michael stayed still  
in the alcove of his tower,  
his petticoats stiff  
with insets and sequins.

It sounds like a caricature, but it is merely a cruelly clear visualization. In every one of the thousands of Spanish churches the holy images are in the care of bigoted women. It is only too obvious why those withered spinsters and stern matrons and timid, intense girls dress male saints in feminine apparel. The saints parade in women's shifts under their draperies, in starched petticoats stiff with embroidery and drawers with starched lace edgings—the 'ruffles' of the poem. With the images of archangels, who are supposed to be sexless, the fancy of the women gets into its full stride. The manly St. Michael and the sweetly feminine St. Raphael of tradition are bedizened with multi-coloured silk



ribbons, particularly in Andalusia and more particularly in towns like Granada.

Lorca's clear and sensitive vision of this kind of religious display with its erotic undercurrent must have its roots in his own childhood when he organized religious processions and mystery plays for the children of his age in Granada.

Yet there runs a pagan streak through Spanish eroticism, even if, by the traditional code, it is banned from married life. It breaks forth in the man's delight in the body of the woman or the other man. It is diluted in sensual romantic poetry and perverted into 'adulterous' passion in conventional plays. In one of Lorca's poems, *Thamar and Amnon*, this pagan feeling is expressed in images akin to the *Song of Songs*.

Scaled waters from the well  
rise loudless in jars.  
Stretched in the moss of the tree-trunks  
the cobra is singing. . . .

Thamar, in your high breasts  
are two fishes that call me,  
and in the tips of your fingers  
a message of the cloistered rose. . . .

Lorca's most widely popular and even hackneyed poem of love, *The Unfaithful Wife*, however, goes back to the *leitmotif* of Spanish sexual ideology: masculine honour and virginity.

. . . It was the night of Santiago,  
and almost by obligation.  
The street-lamps went out  
and the crickets lit up.  
At the last corner  
I touched her sleeping breasts  
and they opened up for me  
like spikes of hyacinths.  
Her starched petticoat  
sounded in my ears  
like a piece of silk  
slit by ten knives. . . .

Her thighs escaped me  
 like trapped fishes,  
 half filled with fire,  
 half filled with ice.  
 That night I rode  
 the best of all roads,  
 astride a pearly mare  
 without bridle or stirrups.  
 Being a man, I will not tell  
 the things she told me. . . .

I behaved like what I am,  
 Like a true-bred gypsy.  
 I gave her a sewing basket,  
 big, of straw-coloured satin,  
 and I did not want to fall in love  
 because, having a husband,  
 she told me she was a maid  
 When I took her to the river.

When I read this poem to the illiterate boy from Jaen whom my friend Angel brought to see me in Madrid, he exclaimed: 'That's right. The bitch. Why did she want to deceive him?'

This was the first reaction. Identifying himself with Lorca's gypsy, he did not mind so much that she was not a virgin as that she had tried to trick him, to make him ridiculous. It is a very common masculine reaction. But it is particularly powerful in Spaniards, whose code of manliness pivots on their 'pride', that is to say, their fear of losing face. The whole poem is built on this particular set of emotions and traditions.

It opens with the statement that the man took the woman with him 'believing she was a maid', that is, feeling himself justified by her virginity. After all, he thought that she was making the supreme sacrifice in his honour. Yet it was *casi por compromiso*, almost by obligation, because he could not escape. This is essential: the chase of the man by the woman precedes the conquest of the woman by the man. Behind the superficial Spanish Don Juan posture lies the conviction, often expressed and more often repressed, that up to the sexual act itself the woman has the active rôle. Spanish women take this for granted, though convention demands the opposite. (Bernard Shaw turned it into a universal

philosophy in *Man and Superman*.) But if the woman offers herself, the man is compelled by his honour to fulfil her wish, because otherwise he would make himself ridiculous and incur the risk of being taken for impotent.

The gypsy in Lorca's ballad expresses this pride in the conquest blended with resignation at having to accede. He praises her attractions:

No camellia, no shell  
has so fine a skin,  
nor do crystals in the moon  
gleam with such brilliance.

He describes his physical sensations 'astride a pearly mare', soberly indicating his own satisfying strength, but he hides in ostentatious modesty 'the things she told him'. Afterwards when he is 'smeared with kisses and sand', he feels the aftermath of revulsion and realizes with resentment that she got him under false pretences: 'she told me she was a maid', but 'she had a husband.' He gets rid of her and saves his face by giving her a beautiful sewing basket, that is, by paying her like a prostitute. And he feels that he has acted like the man he wants to be, 'like what I am,' because—could he have fallen in love with a woman who was not a virgin but tried to trick him into believing it?

It is scarcely possible to portray the attitude of the average Spanish male more faithfully within narrow poetical limits. All the ingredients are there: (a) the women track the man down; (b) the man must do his duty as a conqueror; (c) he confers pleasure on her as an act of grace; (d) it is not done to love a woman if she is not a virgin when she meets the man; (e) a woman who is not a virgin may give pleasure, but she is a prostitute, and it is a rule of honour to pay her so as to make the position clear.

I do not mean to convey that Spaniards are like this or that their sexual relations in everyday life conform to this pattern. But this is how the common Spaniard sees himself, and how he feels he is ought to be. And here lies Lorca's immense power: he makes these obscure sediments of popular Spanish tradition visible with such an emotional impact that he clarifies them.

(Translated by Ilsa Barea)

TO BE CONCLUDED



# SELECTED NOTICES

*Black Record, Germans past and present*, by Sir Robert Vansittart. Hamish Hamilton, 6d.

*The Roots of National Socialism, 1783-1933*, by Rohan D'O. Butler. Faber, 12s. 6d.

These two publications, the first a small popular pamphlet, the second a piece of history written in dignified language, are sample specimens of a literature which, during the last year, has been growing in numbers. It is a literature of hate, such as is bound to crop up as soon as modern war becomes a serious affair. It is a literature deeply reminiscent of products published during the last war in all belligerent countries, and happily forgotten when it was over. There is, however, this difference between the last war and this that, while the literature of hate last time was more or less of the same type, and carried the same kind of appeal on both sides, there is a sharp division this time. In Germany and Italy, no other literature but one of revilement of the enemy is, of course, published. Among the democratic powers, on the contrary, this literature is still scanty, and the very fact that the two publications here under review are so furiously angry is proof that the authors feel they are doing uphill work. Ostensively, their anger is reserved for what Vansittart describes as the 'German butcher-bird'. In fact, his anger is perhaps traceable to his realization that people do not want to listen to him. He is very cross about it, but I believe that, of all the many heartening developments of the last year, it is in fact the one which inspires most faith. The people of this country have stood a year of air-raids. Yet the composers of these melodies of hate will find that these very people still know how to draw a distinction between Nazis and Germans, which Vansittart and Butler would refuse to admit. The period of furious national hatreds is over—it will soon also be over in Germany, where it is only artificially maintained—however much the Nazis would like to keep it alive.

It might therefore be just as well to leave alone the preachers of pitiless revenge upon the innocent for the crimes committed by the guilty, were it not that a correct appreciation of Germany and her future is so all-important for a good peace settlement. In themselves, the products of hate have little importance. They do, however, bar the way to an understanding of the German problem, which is of very great importance indeed. Even a discussion of the literature of hate can contribute to the achievement of such an understanding.

Yet, as far as Vansittart's pamphlet is concerned, it is difficult to admit even such relative usefulness. I remember having read in Germany, as a boy during the last war, a pamphlet by Professor Sombart (now a Nazi) called 'Merchants and heroes'. The dirty merchants were, of course, the English, while the Germans were a race of heroes. Even then I tended to doubt the accuracy of Sombart's view. I hope therefore I shall be permitted also to doubt the accuracy of the statement that most Germans are, by nature (!) butcher-birds. This sort of thing should be sufficiently discredited from the last war, and also from the Nazi methods of creating racial hatred.

There are, however, two explanations for the unpleasantness of the pamphlet,

ough an explanation is not an excuse. The one is that Vansittart is animated, not only by hatred of Germany (he confesses proudly that he hated her before ever Nazism existed, before there was a war in 1914), but also by resentment against the appeasement policy of the Munich period and its standard-bearers at home. Much of what he says is really aimed at them, and in particular at Sir Neville Henderson. Sir Robert Vansittart has every reason for hard feelings, for it was the Munichite set which forced him into the background in 1938; and he is certainly well justified in feeling that that was just the moment when the warning note he was constantly sounding was most necessary. He was deprived of influence at precisely that moment when his influence would have been most valuable, and his bitterness is natural, not on personal grounds, but in view of the disasters which followed and which he might have helped to prevent.

I believe, however, that a different impulse is also traceable in the pamphlet. For Robert Vansittart, it seems to me, has been too much impressed with Nazi methods of propaganda. I may be wrong; but my feeling is that he quite consciously follows certain famous principles, such as that, in order to get masses to fight, you must work upon their instincts, not their intellects; that all facts ought to be reduced to one simple idea which must be repeated *ad nauseam*; that no good points must be conceded to the adversary, but that he must be represented as the embodiment of everything evil. Now all this may be an excellent recipe for a dictatorship where nobody can contradict. It may also be a good recipe for a state of pathological excitement such as existed in Germany during the great economic crisis, when nobody wanted to listen to anything but songs of hate. But the really great thing about this war is this, that despite all sufferings everybody is pathologically excited—except perhaps a few men of the ‘kill-the-birds’ school—outside the Nazi lunatic asylum. Therefore I think this most unpleasant tone of the agitation will just not go down.

It is, to take one instance, very likely that Nazis, when told that the English were always dirty merchants, will forget that the battle of Waterloo was fought by English and Prussians in common. In fact a Waterloo play announcing the battle as a Jewish affair was a roaring success on the Berlin stage in 1937. But the people of the democratic countries are not in a state of frenzy. They remember that some of the most important wars denounced by Vansittart were fought by Prussia as England’s ally. This applies, as everybody knows, to the greatest of Frederic’s wars, which he fought as Chatham’s ally, with English subsidies. It does not apply to Bismarck’s two great wars of 1866 and 1870. But if Lord Vansittart would take pains and look up the files of *The Times* of those days he would find that these wars were fought, though not with English physical, yet with strong moral support on the part of this country. And rightly so. Why should England not have welcomed German unification under Bismarck, a man as outstanding in his efficiency in making war as in his moderation in making peace? The remarkable thing about Bismarck’s policy is not that it was fierce, but that almost incredibly moderate compromise elements followed overwhelming successes in the field. This does perhaps fully apply to the 1871 settlement, but here Bismarck’s hands were tied by military influences which are always out for strategical frontiers, not only in

1855/2.

It will also have a doubtful effect upon people knowing their classics to

learn, from the pen of an eminent diplomatist who apparently is a very bad historian, that German wickedness is proved by Tacitus, who already found that they preferred war to peace. However impressive the statement, it is difficult to avoid remembering that about half of the German tribes known to Tacitus were living between the lower Rhine and the Elbe, and were the forbears of those Anglo-Saxons who conquered England. If Tacitus has any reference to the present situation, then his statement must have more reference to England than to Germany, for the Saxons were the fiercest of all German tribes and both physically and culturally the Saxon strain has been much less diluted in England than any racial strain in Germany. In fact, of course, Tacitus has no reference whatsoever to the present situation. The bellicose Germans he describes, with an undertone of deep approval of their warlike qualities, behaved as all warlike savages behave all over the world. And the quoting of Tacitus in this context can only be paralleled with the Nazi quotations of Tacitus. For the Nazis also quote him, to show that Germany has not changed. They also quote him in order to show that even then the Jews were wicked. But I am afraid an impartial court will rule out the evidence as irrelevant to the case.

Butler's study, as said above, is of a different type, yet the difference is not profound. Vansittart's pamphlet is a popular manifesto, Butler's book a scientific manifesto. Yet history in the service of hate can never be scientific in any serious sense. But Butler's way of arguing is subtler than Vansittart's, and precisely, therefore, a more closely reasoned argument is necessary.

Yet, before I enter into the substance of the argument, the author's method of using historical evidence must be discussed. I cannot help feeling that the sort of inexactitude, of which Butler's study is full, is an even more serious thing as occurring in an ostensibly scientific book, than the cruder misrepresentation of Vansittart. I must limit myself to a few instances, chosen at random.

Dealing with Hegel's philosophy of history, Butler makes Hegel say that history can be schematized into four main periods: Oriental, Greek, Roman, German. A little later he quotes Hegel saying that 'the Germanic spirit is the spirit of the new world'. The translation of the words in inverted commas is quite exact, and, in conjunction with the above-mentioned summary of Hegel's view preceding it, must create the impression, by inference, that Hegel regarded the present age as one of German world-domination. Now though the quotation is exact, the summary is not at all. What Hegel really says about the fourth and last section of general history down to our own times is this: 'To this exclusively secular empire (the Roman Empire) a spiritual empire is opposed. . . . At this point the Germanic Empire, the fourth main period of world history, begins. . . . This Empire starts with the atonement implicit in Christianity'. For the English reader the two terms 'German' and 'Germanic' mean more or less one and the same thing. But the above quotation points sharply to another interpretation, an interpretation obvious to anybody with so much as an elementary knowledge of German. For in German, the two terms 'German' (*deutsch*) and 'Germanic' (*germanisch*) sound quite differently and to every German reader mean two different things. Germanic is a generic term for all those races which more or less derive from the Teutons. Hegel specifies them repeatedly in his works. They are, in the first place, the French, English and Germans, and in the second place the smaller nations of northern



and central Europe. Thus Butler makes Hegel say the exact contrary of what he actually says. Hegel speaks of the community of the European nations, bound together by Christianity; Butler makes him speak of Germany. No wonder that he never mentions the fact that Hegel, once he had passed his wild years, was a bitter adversary of German unity.

Ernst Moritz Arndt, though not well known abroad, created a great stir in Germany as the bard of the wars of liberation against Napoleon (fought in alliance with England). Butler, quite correctly, quotes him saying that 'the German eagle will fly higher and higher with new spirit and exertion and the winds of its wings will attract the white Nordic falcon,' and further on advocating German-Scandinavian unity. 'Arndt,' the author continues, 'was native of the island of Ruegen, and his northern upbringing probably accounts for such Nordic fervour.' The reader, inevitably, will remember the Nazi invasion of Norway and Denmark, and wonderingly ask himself: Did they actually contemplate that move one hundred and thirty years ago? Now English readers are certainly under no obligation to know that the island of Ruegen, so actually mentioned in a different context, was Swedish at the time when Arndt was born and grew up, and that Arndt himself was a loyal Swedish subject, though German was his mother-tongue. This crucial fact seems to have escaped Butler's attention, though it provides the clue of Arndt's attitude towards the Scandinavian problem. Torn between the loyalty to Sweden and to Germany, he envisages a sort of free confederation of all Germanic (not German) nations as a solution. It is an idea pointing, not towards a German conquest but towards a European federal union.

Now another instance, from quite a different context: The brothers Gerlach, unknown figures outside Germany (it is one of the chief troubles with Butler's book that in most cases the ordinary reader cannot check up upon his statements), but in the history of Prussian conservatism they are important. Together with a few others they were the extremists among the partisans of hereditary rights; they were both advisers of King Frederick William IV, and were friends of Bismarck in his earlier days. Now Wilhelm von Gerlach, in defending the extreme viewpoint that all statutory law is revolutionary and therefore objectionable (for only customary law is just), is confronted with a difficulty. The most ancient rules and privileges have, after all, originated at a given moment, and as often as not through acts of violence. Revolution, the Gerlachs maintain, and really all kinds of innovations, are the direct work of man. But as Butler correctly quotes Wilhelm von Gerlach saying, 'right grows out of wrong like flowers out of a hotbed'.

Gerlach's view is the exact counterpart of that of his older contemporary, Lord Elton, who rejected English parliamentary reform because it infringed lawfully acquired privileges. (Lord Elton would also have maintained that it was not possible to go back beyond William the Conqueror, the *status quo* must be regarded as the only rule of right and wrong.) It is the viewpoint of an extreme legalist feeling scruples even about the fact that present-day right may have sprung from some wrong centuries ago. As an extreme conservative, an scrupulous defender of law and order, Gerlach actually rejected the idea of Prussian expansion as incompatible with the tradition of German historical justice, and firmly defended Austrian supremacy in Germany. That was one of the

reasons of his later rupture with Bismarck. In Butler's pages this overscrupulous gentleman is represented as a man declaring that right is wrong and wrong is right—all by means of the one quotation given above and torn from its context.

Still another instance, concerning something quite different. This is Butler's story about Fr. Nietzsche's end:

'So self-conscious an ego is a very jealous thing. Nietzsche could not shake it off at night. He got no sleep. Drugs could not take him out of himself, until he knowingly took them in such quantities that they drove him out of his mind. On the 2nd or 3rd of January 1889 Nietzsche went mad. A few days later his friend Overbeck found him in his humble furnished lodgings at Turin ploughing the piano with his elbow, singing and shrieking in demented self-glorification. It was a logical conclusion. For ruthlessness is a lonely thing, and if the void be filled by egotism, perfected and expanding within itself, there comes megalomania, paranoia, insanity.'

What beautiful melodrama! Almost as uplifting as a Victorian moral story where the wicked man is inevitably overtaken by the vengeance lurking within his own soul! Almost reminiscent of Greek tragedy! Only—not history at all, which is a humbler thing than melodrama. Nietzsche, according to the certificate of his asylum, went mad and died from cerebral paralysis, a post-syphilitic disease. A few Nietzscheans were furious about it, for it is not heroic to die of syphilis. Yet there never has been brought a shred of evidence against the doctor's verdict.

Instances of this kind could be multiplied, but nothing would be gained by it. Butler's work certainly ought not to be consulted as a textbook of the history of German political ideas, nor of any other aspect of history. Yet we must deal with his main thesis, which is only in part dependent upon this rubbish-heap of slipshod quotations from which Butler builds it up. This main thesis is astonishingly simple. Germans, Butler says, may be quite decent individually. But in politics they act according to their political doctrines, and these doctrines are divided by an abyss from the political doctrines of the West. The West believes in natural law—Germany believes in history. Natural law teaches absolute rules of conduct—history regards everything as relative. The trouble with Germany is that German thought has been dominated by the 'historical school'.

What is the historical school? It is a trend of thought which, despite Butler's assertions to the contrary, has dominated the intellectual outlook of all Western countries since the end of the eighteenth century. Mr. Butler is challenged to mention a single important representative of the school of natural law in any European country after 1830, with the exception of the Catholic version of natural law, which has taken quite a specific development. The tenets of the historical school represent a sharp reaction against the 'rationalist' thought of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, of the era of enlightenment. Rationalism, as best represented in Descartes, Leibniz, Voltaire and Hume, assumed that the rules of human conduct must be uniform, and that all deviations from this uniformity were deviations from nature. The rules of human behaviour were in every respect reducible to the commands of one and the same universal reason. Local and historical peculiarities were therefore rejected in principle.

unreasonable, objectionable, and ultimately as wicked. That viewpoint and final expression in the principles of the French Revolution. After it, it lost credit for good.

The historical school, as I said, grew up in contrast to the rationalist school. It emphasized that it was very difficult to discover any common rules of human behaviour, generally recognized; that thought, beliefs, morals and political institutions varied with time and place; that history was the chief approach to understanding of these variations; that the generalities of the age of enlightenment were practically valueless. The historical school is divided into many branches and varieties. Its most outstanding English variety was probably the evolutionary school of the Darwinians, of Spencer, Tylor, etc. All leading English representatives of legal and economic history were deeply influenced by evolutionism. In France, the historical school is closely bound up with what the French call the 'sociological school', whose chief representatives were Comte, August Comte, Toqueville and Taine. But romantics such as Michelet, Guizot, Fustel de Coulanges, and de Maistre come also under the heading of the historical school, as also French historians of the Fustel de Coulanges type. Last, but not least, France had been leading in introducing the historical point of view into the sciences, and men such as Cuvier, Geoffroy St. Hilaire and Lamarck must be mentioned in this context, no less than Darwin in England and his disciples in all countries. Compared with all these, the German contribution to the historical school appears almost insignificant. Germany has contributed very little to the laying of the foundations of modern evolutionary geology and biology, and of pre-history and social anthropology. She has also been late in entering the field of research in the history of the older civilizations. Her contribution, however, was important in the field of the philosophy of history, where Herder, Fichte, Hegel and many others excelled, and in laying the foundations of the critical method of classical and modern history, which was followed by Ranke, Niebuhr and Mommsen, together with others. The synthesis of most of it is contained in Marx, whom Butler, characteristically, forgets to mention. Through Marx and other historically-minded socialists the historical school won admission in Russia, where Byelinski, Chernishevski, Soloviev, and many others developed it in a specifically Russian manner.

The above remarks should be sufficient to show one very simple fact. Not only is the historical school not something specifically German, it is, on the contrary, a world-wide current all through the nineteenth and twentieth century and its main tenets are objective truth, not doubted by any serious scholar. Butler's appeals to 'natural law' are of little use. The first rule of natural law, in matters of science, seems to be that truth must rule supreme. For a man living in natural law there cannot be pleasant and unpleasant doctrines, but only true and false ones. It is the more surprising that our champion of natural law does not find it worth his while, in all his angry attacks upon the historical school, to inquire what element of truth it contains. It is German, he maintains—and this also is not true—and connected with German aggression, and is bad.

In fact, as already observed, the historical school's doctrine is not limited to the physical world. Before it arose, it was believed that God had created the stars, the earth, and the species upon it, as they are now. When it had won through, we knew



that the solar system, the geological structure of our planet, and the species living on it, were products of historical developments, developments which had also brought man himself into being. Before the historical school arose, we had believed that man was essentially the same, always and everywhere. The historical school made and makes us aware of man's evolution, of his total transformation throughout history. Before there was an historical school, we thought that there was only one true set of moral rules, of religious beliefs, of political and economic institutions. Now we know that all this is changing and relative. The systematic use of the historical viewpoint is the greatest and most fertile advance the human mind has made since the days of Galilei. And this tremendous advance Butler denounces as a moral aberration, contrasting it with a pretended allegiance of the West to some school of natural law. It would be a shame for the West to have stuck to the outworn concepts of Descartes and Rousseau, and a glory for Germany to have overcome them. But in fact the West has committed no such crime against the spirit of free research, nor can Germany claim the main glory for the advance.

But Butler seems sometimes to interpret the term 'historical school' in a narrower sense. As against the French rationalists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, who had emphasized the universality of human reason, the new historical school, of which such men as Herder, Hegel and Ranke, atypical representatives, emphasized the peculiarities of every individual nation. They gave the historical point of view, in part, a conservative bend. Nations are separated individualities: what suits one, does not necessarily suit others. The argument was turned sharply against the introduction of French liberalism into Germany. Only Butler is far off the mark when he regards even this as specifically German development, though at a certain moment these arguments were much used by German conservatives against French influence upon German political ideas. The roots of conservative historicism are not in Germany, which, on the contrary, borrowed it in a fully-developed state. The first to proclaim the idea was the Italian Vico; but he was forgotten. Then Montesquieu, in his *esprit des lois*, spent several hundred pages in demonstrating that every country needs a different type of constitution; and Montesquieu was read by all Europe. Then Burke adopted the idea from Montesquieu, and turned it against the French Revolution: Constitutions do not derive from reason and planning, but from historical traditions. With him, conservative historicism was fully developed. All the Germans did was to adopt it. And even in adopting it they were deeply influenced by the three French masters of conservative anti-rationalism, by Chateaubriand, Bonal and de Maistre.

That the historical viewpoint is connected with a relativist philosophy, that it tends to undermine unquestioning acceptance of established institutions and rules of conduct, is an undeniable fact. This relativism is not, however, without its qualifications. For it is obvious that change and evolution are not something haphazard, that there is a pattern in them which must be discovered. This, at any rate, was the belief of all the great English and French evolutionists, as also of Herder, Goethe, Hegel. The absolute, from a tangible thing which is supposed to be always with us, becomes, with the evolutionists, a result of a long process. But it does not disappear. That no simple and unquestioning faith can be extracted from historicism is perfectly true, and it is also true that here

marks one of the chief dangers for our civilization. But it is a danger incurred in the service of objective truth. And it is certainly not a specifically German danger. Thus Mr. Butler has the choice: He must either throw the main results of European thought during the last one hundred and fifty years overboard in order to be able to denounce all these results as proto-Nazi ideas; or he must abandon his indictment of Germany. The latter is, of course, the only view in accordance with the facts. But then the problem remains: Where must we look for the roots of national-socialism?

The answer to this query seems fairly simple to me. We must look for them in a direction diametrically opposed to that where Butler is looking for them: in the rejection of the historical viewpoint. The historical viewpoint is always critical and relativistic. No doctrine of the absolute superiority of one race can be constructed upon the basic assumptions of historicism. Before the Nazis could claim superiority for the Nordic race they had to destroy the whole tradition of German, and to attack the whole tradition of European thought. For what Butler proclaims is the absolute opposite of historicism: his doctrine after all is, that racial characteristics are unchanging, and that these unchanging characteristics of race are the basis of all history, which in the terms of this notion ceases to be real history at all, as its fundamentals do not change, hence are not historical. It is sometimes maintained that the essence of the Nazi ideology is the rejection of the sociological and enhancement of the biological view of human affairs. This is true, but it is incomplete. For there is no absolute boundary between an historically interpreted sociology and an evolutionary biology of the Lamarckian or Darwinian type, for such a biology is itself an element in a comprehensive historical view of the universe. Yet Hitler's private version of biology is not historical. Its chief tenet is precisely what all serious biologists reject: the immutability of species. Hitlerism might be defined as a sort of neo-Weismannism, a doctrine of absolute rejection of the mutability of species, extended from biology to history and human affairs in general. A search for the roots of national-socialism will therefore have to start, not with wholly imaginary juxtapositions between a West believing in absolute naturalism, and a Germany obsessed with history, but with a study of the development of the anti-historical biological interpretation of human affairs.

Stated in such terms, the problem becomes simple indeed. It is then obvious, to begin with, that even Hitlerism is not a specifically German phenomenon. The specifically Nazi point of view has been invented by Count Gobineau, the French aristocrat, in the middle of the nineteenth century, and elaborated by Houston Stewart Chamberlain, towards the end of it. Even Butler cannot avoid mentioning those two, thus indirectly disproving his thesis of the specifically German character of Nazism. But in his study their contributions appear as incidental in the evolution of historicism, which Butler makes start with Herder, whereas in reality they are precisely the first manifestos of anti-historicism, of a fundamentally new (and reactionary) trend of ideas.

As to Germany, not a shadow of doubt can exist about the history of the emergence of this new ideology. It was introduced into Germany by Nietzsche. The second one of his published works contains a famous disquisition into the advantages and dangers of historicism. It is characteristic of Butler's approach to his problem that he has failed to notice this all-important



manifesto of the anti-historical school, which appeared in 1872. Nietzsche had started with a study about the Greek poet Theognis, and continued with a work on Greek tragedy, both largely in the manner of the historical school. Then, after the war of 1870, he reacted violently against historicism, following up hints contained in the works of his master Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer, whose chief work had appeared in 1819, hated history, and he, if any man, must be regarded as the chief precursor of anti-historicism, as Nietzsche as its first prophet inside Germany. But whereas Schopenhauer's attitude to human affairs in general was negative, Nietzsche's was not. He adopted Schopenhauer's scorn of history, but opposed to it a non-historical sociology, the racial one. Logically, he emphasized the supreme importance of biological vitality and decadence, explained democracy in terms of biological decay, emphasized the value of brutality, the danger of humanitarianism, and ended up with the will to power and the foreshadowing of the return of the 'blond beast'. There is not a shadow of all this in all the great masters of historicism, in Herder, Fichte, Hegel, Ranke and many others slandered by Butler as precursors of the Nazis. The new point of view was born in reaction against historicism, in connection with (though also in criticism of) the victory of 1870, and then got ground rapidly.

But not only in Germany! Towards the end of his long study, Butler has one poor paragraph mentioning that, after all, trends of ideas parallel to those criticized by him exist also outside Germany. The fact is that, in Germany, Gobineau and Nietzsche had only followers of slight calibre. The main development of the pseudo-biological anti-historical viewpoint took place in France and Italy. The name of Peladan may be forgotten today, but he was the poet of the new school. The name of George Sorel, the syndicalist, is alive; but the classical formula for a biological interpretation of human affairs has been given in Vilfredo Pareto's 'Sociologia generale' which, though in my view mistaken in essentials, is not a contemptible contribution. Only the 'blond beast' is neither able nor willing to appreciate fine-spun theoretical deductions. The blond beast, in the shape of Hitler and his following, trampled along the path designed by others, levelling down, deforming, vulgarizing what Nietzsche, Sorel and Pareto had brilliantly maintained, and stuffing it out with pseudo-Darwinian implements and the fruits of their reading of popular pamphlets on the races of the world.

Thus, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Western world believed in rationalism, and in natural law. France and England were leading, Germany, being in the period of her deepest decay, was a poor disciple of great masters. Only towards the end of this period does her contribution become important, mainly through the work of Kant. From the end of the eighteenth century onwards, the world believes in history and in evolution. In this development Germany takes her full share. From the last quarter of the nineteenth century onwards the evolutionary creed is shaken, and among many counter-currents a pseudo-biological school gains in importance. To its development Germany contributes, though less than other countries. That is all.

There remains the problem: Why then did this school, in Germany, gain political power? The answer was always known, long before Vansittart told us about butcher-birds and Butler about the wickedness of the historical school.



Fascism is exactly as much an international phenomenon as monarchical absolutism in the seventeenth, and liberal democracy in the nineteenth century, were before. If, in Germany, and a number of other countries (in fact in all countries east of the Rhine, with the one exception of Czechoslovakia), it caught on more easily than in the West, it is because the West has a century-old tradition of democracy which is lacking in the East. Fascist trends were and are not weak in the West—far from it. One has only to read Vansittart and Butler to be aware of their presence. If they have not got, and in all probability will not get, the upper hand in this country it is because democratic traditions are deeply engrained in its social and political make-up.

F. BORKENAU

Owing to further cuts in the paper ration, *Horizon* must inform its readers that there will be no certainty of obtaining any copies in future except those ordered in advance. Graham Sutherland's 'Welsh Sketch-book' will appear in the next number.

## **THE AERODROME** *Rex Warner*

One of the few important novels of the war years. 'I have read literally every book which has anything to do with the war . . . and ahead of them, exciting, imaginative, is Rex Warner's fantastic *The Aerodrome*.' TOM HARRISON in 'HORIZON.' 7s. 6d.

## **NIGHT SHIFT** *Inez Holden*

'To me the most truthful and most exciting account of wartime industrial Britain.'—J. B. PRIESTLEY. 5s.

THE BODLEY HEAD

# Weekly report from the U.S.

## in *The New Republic*

---

Totalitarian countries have one party, one leader, one idea. A democracy is proud of its diversity.

Democracy, of necessity, has one leading idea and purpose today: the defeat of the totalitarian military threat. That is a job of strategy and production.

The weekly *New Republic* reports on the progress of that job in the United States. In its stories on aluminium and steel, on industrial production, on labour problems, it gives readers essential information, sometimes before

the daily newspapers have published it.

*The New Republic* also brings to its readers the enjoyment of all the aspects of democratic civilization. It reviews and criticises the most interesting new books, the new plays, moving pictures, and the news of the other arts. Its articles on the American scene are authoritative and informative.

Many readers in Great Britain subscribe to *The New Republic* to keep informed of events and thought in the United States. Special rate to readers of *Horizon*:

## 13 weeks for 5/-

---

HORIZON, 6 SELWYN HOUSE, 2 LANSDOWNE TERRACE, W.C.1

For the enclosed 5/- please send me *The New Republic* for the next thirteen weeks.

Name .....

Address .....

Published by the Proprietors, HORIZON, 6 Selwyn House, Lansdowne Terrace, London, W.C.1, and printed in England at The Curwen Press, Ltd., Plaistow, London, E.13